

HOMELESS AT HOME

EVERYTHING AIN'T WHAT IT SEEMS

Jonathan Schiesel
Outfar10.com
Jonathan@Outfar10.com

Table of Contents

PREFACE	Page 3
Chapter 1: Z and ME.....	Page 5
Chapter 2: B	Page 60
Chapter 3: M	Page 67
Chapter 4: K	Page 94
Chapter 5: W	Page 137
Chapter 6: A	Page 160
Chapter 7: K2	Page 176
Chapter 8: S	Page 195
EPILOGUE	Page 230

Preface

Dear Reader,

The chapters within are windows to my direct experiences with youths and their families who were my clients. My work with them has been to establish a relationship that allows a diminishment of confusion and an increase in light that can lead them to a greater sense of the joy of family.

The family situations that I enter are chaotic often with features of physical and verbal aggression expressed by the client and any other member of the family. I have seen the aggression of grandparents as they chased and cornered the child for some perceived wrongdoing. I have seen adolescents chasing their parents in a rage as a result of feeling treated unfairly or humiliated.

The language that the families use are similar in that there is a lack of empathy and that there is no “Pause Button” to prevent immediate reactive behavior.

The families are desperate by the time I am called into service. “We’ve had it. The kid is a menace. We have to rid ourselves of this threat.” As a result the parent(s) is/are usually focused on having the child removed from the home to be put into placement. They have been offered therapeutic services and professional have often worked with the client and the family for some time. In all cases the common complaint from the adults is, “We’ve already tried everything. Nothing works!” My job is to prevent the placement.

It is important to understand that the family’s participation is strictly voluntary. My only “Authority” is my ability to connect with people under extreme situations experiencing overwhelming stress. At best the situations are sad, but definitely not hopeless. The situations are not hopeless because the families have actually demonstrated an incredible degree of resilience. It is this resilience that is the fulcrum upon which I apply pressure. I know that regardless of what they say that they actually haven’t given up in their effort to hold their family together. They may not be aware of this, however I am.

There are limits to my ability to be supportive. The scope of my work does not provide me with the authority of providing therapy to deal with issues. For that I must depend upon the therapist who has requested my services. I also do not have the ability to provide material support to the family. For that I have to depend upon the professional skills of other members of the team. Also, regardless of my ability to connect I do not control the circumstances within which I interact with the family nor do I have the authority to alter the environmental influences on the family such as their finances, their relationships with other providers, their understanding of various legal complications, etc. At times, these influences can and do undermine the work.

Because I am male I am allowed to work only with males, be they children or adolescents. I must be capable in navigating the difficult waters of mothers who have no confidence or trust in men. This places me in their cross-hairs; the need for these mothers to undermine my work in order to feel that they can continue to maintain the control that they have over their families. It is important to know that not all of the mothers are single parenting. However the only men that they will live with must be subordinate to them, and this includes their sons.

As you read and thereby look into the windows that illuminate the homes within

which I work, you will experience with me the challenge that I have in suggesting to these mothers to help me liberate them sufficiently from the chains of their poor and too often traumatic experiences with men to the degree that they will allow their sons to have some freedom to be appreciated and encouraged. When I make some headway in this, the boys again begin to grow as they too then can let down their defenses sufficiently to allow me to relate to them. The ultimate test is whether I can relate in a good way with the mother of the home. As is almost always true, progress for the child is in direct relationship to the growth of the parent.

When this happens I can then be a positive role model to the boys and also to the mothers that having a healthy relationships is worth working for especially when they have the assistance of a man who has no other interest in them except for their welfare. In this process of supporting greater balance in these families the men then too can have the freedom to more fully re-engage with their sons. Of course, this isn't always possible, as you will see as you read further into this book.

Again, this writing is personal. It is how I experienced myself in such situations. I sincerely hope that you can connect to these happenings. One more point that I have to make and apologize for. I have edited this work numerous time, yet I am very aware that there continues to be numerous "uncaught" grammatical errors. I've had enough of editing and trying to find more errors. Hopefully it's not just my ego that has me believing that the substance of the book is worth the reading even with the existence of the errors.

JONATHAN R. SCHIESEL

Z and Me

Z opened my heart a bit further. My life as an adult has been the outcome of a series of tsunamis that slam into my life each and every time I feel that I have built a home, a job, a relationship. It's not really a nightmare, rather the result of being tethered to a spiritual location that happens to be in the course of tidal surges that periodically inundate everything in its path. My body is free to move, but within strict amorphous boundaries. It's like no matter how far I move when I wake up, without my knowing it, I am turned around and the day's journey, no matter how different the path appears, just returns me to the starting point.

This isn't all bad. I am working hard to hold a bubble together, but at the same time being required to keep expanding it, so that no matter how careful I am it of course eventually bursts. Sometimes I am that bubble and as when it liberates itself when blown and floats with the wind, it too must burst at some point, but at least it's liberated for a wonderful ride up to that point of dissipation. That's the part that isn't all bad. Something like the high before the crash.

Each time I go through the cycle I am highly motivated and am fully focused on my goal to keep it together this time. I take all that I know into each effort, each relationship, and carefully craft myself to place into effect all of my past experiences. Each time I make it a bit further, and gain a great deal of satisfaction from that...and when it collapses, I am pleased with the depth that was attained, and feel that I am getting closer to the goal of keeping it together no matter what the obstacles, challenges, or changes caused by genetic impulses whose time it is to manifest, or to cease. I suppose I might suggest that what I'm good at is starting over; maybe I crash just so that in starting over I can feel excited and energized. Nah!

You know, it's an amazing venture, to have such incredible resilience that no matter how strong the discouragement, after a good and healing rest, I rise up and am completely ready for more.

My work is relationship building. Nothing like getting paid for what I'm good at even if it's not good: turning the bad into the good or something like that. Make the best of a bad situation. Hmm. I get paid to connect with people who are desperately isolated and confused. What I mean is that my path has taken me to work that allows me to make a living while I search for the connection to myself with others. Or to put it more succinctly, it is in others that I discover myself. Or more bizarrely, I see these others as my self, and in getting to engage with them I come into being.

The circumstances that lead me to each one of them is disheartening and at times, frightening. I mean in order for them to come into my life, they have had to suffer incredible pain and suffering. What's great about them is that's like me, hmmm, they demonstrate a depth of resilience that harbors the hope of humanity. However this hope is buried deep within their pain, and in order for humanity to gain the benefit of this hope, someone must enter into a relationship with them that allows them to begin to heal, and to gradually let go the incredible psychic armor that protects their hearts, and also which keeps them bound to their sorrow.

The sorrow that humanity collectively creates is mostly experienced by these

people, and through no fault of their own, they are born into circumstances that destroy most of their peers. Unless I take karma into account, but why do this? It diminishes their heroism. They are born into families that have been taken in the holocaust onto trains for the concentration camps. Somehow on the way, by enlarging the shit hole in the floor of the box car, the parents who were not so overwhelmed as to become completely passive were able to drop them under the train and with a prayer left to the elements with at least a hope for survival. They did survive, but can you imagine the trauma, the terror, the loss of trust that comes from such survival. In being dumped into the shit hole, I survive.

Yes, I'm Jewish, but it could have been the same in Rwanda and Cambodia, the United States as it expanded West, The Hebrews as they slaughtered their way into the land of Milk and Honey, the Mongols following suit should any city not bow and open its gates, or the Crusades and the Inquisition, or the spread of Islam, or in any number of places...do not all conquering cultures ascend upon the back of terror, death, and the plowing under of the conquered. Yes, any number of places where the survivors push through the shadows. These people are people...they are the saviors of humanity should they be touched by love, a love that can open their hearts to once again be receptive to the nurturing of their lost mothers. It's not in only helping them that one finds salvation. It is also in their allowing the help that is salvation. What changes in a person whose ancestors perpetrated genocide when they choose to take ancestral responsibility and seek a relationship with the survivors?

Is it ever that the damage is too great? Are the conqueror's children too damaged by being born into supremacy, too weakened by a life of entitlement, too blinded by their elite education to sense the incomplete history; the parts left out that allows one to elevate murder into an act of Divine Order; to act in such a murderous fashion in the name of The Most Holy? In what manner can such a Command be otherwise interpreted that allows one to scream the name of The Most Holy as one slashes one's sword into the life of another and to feel that it's justified as it allows the spread of the Name of The One held most Holy? Is that not always the consequence of passing one's soul into the hands of the Divine Word? Warfare, the highest state of delusion. "I'm here to save you, and by the way, can I have your sister? How about your brother? Maybe your children? If you really want to prove that you are one with the One, you will do what's best...give me all that you have, and be grateful that I return to you the right to work the Lord's Land and to keep a fifth. After all, am I not magnanimous as the voice of The Lord? Now I will protect you from enemies and keep you safe, but of course you will have to come to my summons when the army needs your might. Do as you're told and you will have less to worry about, right? Of course it's Right." To be born into this mindset, the mindset of a slavish victim of innocent progeneration.

To be sucking at the breast of a slave, a mother fearful for her male child, knowing that at some point his balls will expand and the young bull will need to be castrated before the testosterone turns him into defiance...the bell tone of his bellow bringing out the herd stud, who must put him in his place before the master comes and snips his balls for real. The mother fears for his life, and must unman him to assure his survival, at least unmanned in the presence of the master and his people. Impotent in the face of the master, but the rage burns deep and with his head bowed as he does his work, at night, he changes and transforms into a nightmare for his brothers who draw knives

and slice each other in declaration of their hidden power. Me, I, Strong and Dangerous...but not so when in front of the eyes that look for any sign of power. What is it like to live in this manner where his whole identity is falsified to assure his survival, and the survival of those he loves? Love? Yes loves, but also hates, hates because of their love for him they sacrificed his manhood...How can any man cope with such pain, those who unman him are the ones who love him and in his love he hates. His mother emasculates him to keep him alive...the one who suckled him at her breast, and pushed his father into insanity for his impotence to take his family from slavery...the true trauma of slavery...and in so many forms this has taken place, with no hope for liberation, no where to run, no one who would take him in with such a well hidden banked fire of rage.

Z, born to be insane, a slave made by his family...his father, R, the hidden consequence of Native American subjugation, the rage directed at his male children for he dared not fight the man who has the power to make his family suffer for his strength. He fights his brothers to feel a sense of his manhood and he teaches through beating his sons the art of fighting, through the generations until it slams into Z's soul... the soul that rings a bell which I can hear, and to which I come...the bell's whose tone lifts me and lifts my feet in dance to the melody and underlying rhythm of nature's breath.

It took generations to make Z, whose grandfather was full blood, his father half, and K looking white; blue eyes, all white... red/orange hair but not all white...1/4 blood full warrior, hero of the weak, protector of his mother, never lost a fight...quick mouth ready to strike, hoping to be struck so that he can unleash his rage, his competence, his sense of worth...bloody knuckles, very bloody.

The first time I met Z was at the clinic, with his therapist and mother. His father, R, a Vietnam Vet. had died the month before of hepatitis C and alcohol consumption. His mother was quiet and passive allowing the therapist to introduce me and to do most of the talking. My work is titled a TBS Coach. TBS stands for Therapeutic Behavioral Services. I work with a mental health team and am responsible for going into the home to work with Z and his family to prevent Z from being placed in an out-of-state residential school. Z was quiet as his mother. I explained about TBS and explained that I would have to visit with them in the home. I had previously been informed by the therapist that the mother never allowed any professionals into her home. However, for some Divine reason, she was receptive and an appointment was set. Not so bad, I thought.

A few days later I was at the apartment that overlooks the freeway. I rang the bell and then again. Eventually Z answered keeping the chain secure and asked who I was. I was a bit surprised but stated my name again and told him I was his coach. There was a pause and I could hear a faint murmur of discussion coming from behind the locked door. After a minute the door opened and his mother was standing there. She excused the "mess" and invited me in. Z wasn't in view and so I followed her into the living room. The couch, the table, the floor, every surface in view was covered with papers, clothes, bottles, plates encrusted with leftovers, and cups with various fluids. I responded to the shocking view by noting the balcony which was filled with bags of recyclables, two bikes, and happily a number of potted plants. I immediately asked the mother if I could take a closer look at the plants and she opened the screen door. I praised her on how healthy and wonderful looking the plants were growing and the mother seemed pleased. I then remarked how pleasing the view was from the balcony with the trees providing shade with their leafy cover. When I turned around to reenter the apartment my eyes took

a second to take in the fact that Z was standing in front of me and in extended arms high over his head there with a hatchet in one hand and a machete in the other hand. This, what a rush, was the beginning of our relationship.

I looked Z in the eyes with a smile on my face and said, "Cool weapons. Can I look at them?" Happily he gave me one then the other. I inspected them carefully and told Z that they were well kept and then handed them back to him. Later on in our relationship I asked him what he was going to do with the weapons. He related that he didn't trust no one with his mother and if I had made any move to harm her he was going to brain me. I complimented him on being on duty and taking the role of his mother's protector. What an insight into Z for wasn't it true that he really didn't know who I was except some bureaucrat being forced on him and his mother. Still, I was the first bureaucrat that his mother had let into the home. Something good was happening here and I was blessed to be part of their story. OK, a little bit relieved to still be alive.

I started to meet with Z and his mother three times a week. For the first few weeks I met him at home and walked with him to the local fast food for a bite to eat. Getting something to eat and eating together has a subtle but powerful affect on a relationship. I mean, who do we eat with? Family and friends, right? Even without that relationship in place, such as in my case, sharing a meal together still is a bonding force. Of course being cool, humorous, and patient doesn't hurt. Just kidding...no I'm not. Too bad I don't know how to put a grin into this space.

I soon met Z's closest friend, S, a tall overweight guy with purple hair. By the way Z was only about 5'9", and weighed about 270 lbs. S being older had a strong influence on Z. Z has an older brother, quite a bit older who was caring about Z, but in a crude and inconsistent way. He hadn't any big brother instincts. Well he kind of did, but it was restrained behind a lot of abuse from their father; the lesson being there is pain attached to those who are supposed to look out for you. So his instincts were repressed and he couldn't be a big brother like one who would teach or protect. Rather he was emotionally distant, but would every once in a while connect for a short time, give some money...then as if he was doing something wrong, he would cycle into detachment again...being judgmental and put Z down.

S was way out there and Z let me know that he had a history of schizophrenia. S was a neighbor, living in the Z's apartment complex with his wife, baby, and his mother and father. It makes me tremble to imagine what life had to be like for them, as his wife and parents all suffered from various forms of mental illness. His father's political position was off the scale to the right; fascist, racist preaching the need to exterminate people who didn't fit into his scheme of things...government included along with people of any minority standing. Still they made their way. That's one of the great aspects of America...there room for everyone, as long as they don't act upon all of their thoughts.

S supported his father's bigotry, but happily when Z was with me, he didn't expound upon the theme and should he bring it up, he was quick to cool out when I related how difficult it was for me to want to give him a ride home. Just kidding about that, but he didn't want to offend me and I found that admirable.

I told Z a story that might have helped him contain himself. I had a client when I was a broker in commercial real estate. He was Jewish as I am...very reformed, but still a Jew. He had an employee whom I had to give a ride to. As we were driving along the freeway he hesitantly then with more confidence began to tell me how much he hated

Jews. I don't look or "act" Jewish, so he figured I was just one of the goyim, a gentile, a non-Jew. I was interested in his reasoning and feelings. He told me the usual how the Jews are the devils incarnate, control the money, rule the world, are "eating" the hearts out of hard working Christians, and so forth and so on. I listened, I grunted appropriately, and all the while I was thinking strongly of stopping my car in the median, and kicking his sorry ass out of the car after sweetly smiling and informing him, like his boss I too am Jewish. Yes, leave him stranded in the middle of the freeway. But then I wondered where this would all go. So I continued to listen then started inquiring how the Jews figured out how to control the money and run the world. He then began to tell me that actually he admired the Jews for being so powerful and all the while being so few. He then told me of many fine attributes of Jewish people, and then he finished it off by telling me how much he looked forward to retiring and to move back to Missouri where he had a piece of land and that all he wanted to do is to raise and slaughter pigs. Perfect, I told him. Your goal is great. I wish you and your family good fortune.

"I was proud," I told Z, "to have handled the situation so well and because I was respectful and showed interest in his viewpoint, he discovered the positive in the negative and moved from his bigoted feelings of inadequacy and jealousy to one of admiration for his "enemy." The enemy within. And then of course, to hear that he was choosing to live the rest of his life with a pack of pigs, with all that comes from raising them, some form of poetic justice or just this man was getting the opportunity to experience first hand the life he will be reborn into because of his terrible thoughts about a people who never harmed him. .

Anyway, Z got the point of the story. He told me he admired my patience and being Jewish must be wonderful to be able to be so smart, and to have so much self control.

"Well," Z, I told him, "We haven't survived against so much hate and adversity without picking up a few things along the way. Survival is the teacher, and I'm sure that you being a survivor have also picked up a lot of lessons. The only difference between us is that I'm a great deal older than you and seek my results without bringing a lot of attention to myself. When someone hurts me or my family I don't broadcast my intentions and I don't take care of my business in front of a crowd. That's what you do when you're young and have the ability to recover quickly from injury. Us old guys have done that, but now we choose to be more proficient and subtle. It allows me to go home and to sleep peacefully knowing that I am a man and yet have so few enemies. Besides, I am working on communicating effectively, so that the outcome achieves my intent. I'm not into blaming someone for being able to intimidate me, kick my ass, or take advantage of my weakness. If someone can do that to me, that person immediately becomes my teacher. They have a great deal to teach me, meaning how they were able to do that to me. My job is to learn how they did it and then how to prevent it from happening again when I am with them. Kind of how you learned how to fight by having your father teach you the hard way. The point is you didn't collapse; he didn't break your spirit. You demonstrated perseverance and courage by learning all that he knew so that you could protect yourself from him and then thereafter protect your family. Don't resent mistreatment. Try to figure out how it was done, what you failed to be aware of and make corrections in your life so that you strengthen yourself. There's nothing that weakens us more than blaming someone else for our deficiencies."

The more time I spent with Z, the more I came to respect him and I feel he feels the same with me. Basically because I am also an artist, it was the fact that Z could write poetry and turn them into rap, of course regardless of the subject matter that I found so disturbing that opened up another connection for me. One more thing about Z that warmed my heart. I discovered that Z was a small ghetto super hero.

The first incident he told me had happened in the parking lot at his school when he came across a guy assaulting a girl. It never crossed his mind to turn his head. Instead he walked right up to the guy and stepped between him and the girl and challenged him to take a swing. Half way through the swing the guy was on the ground being stomped on by Z. Finishing that he turned to the girl and said, "You got to make better choice in friends." I was impressed with Z. A poet and a street hero.

In the first few weeks I found out that Z got into fights more than often. In each case he was "saving" a friend or a defenseless person. Fear didn't enter into it. He told me that he only had one person to fear and that was his dad. He told me that his dad would bust him should he ever lose a fight. His dad taught him fighting from infancy and expected him to use it no matter the size or number of opponents. He learned to be fast by practicing getting out of his father's way when his father would be chasing him to kick his ass because of something or another. That was how he learned to take a blow, how to handle pain, how to keep it to himself, never running to his mom like a punk, so that his mom and dad wouldn't fight. Z was a peace man at heart; he didn't like his mom to be worked up because his dad whooped him again.

After a month we were no longer walking to the local fast food. I felt confident enough in my relationship with Z to start taking him places in my car. I started to take him to Spires, a moderately priced coffee shop a few miles away. It was then that I realized that Z didn't know the names of his local streets; not even the major streets. He also wasn't sure of direction. No matter how many times I took him to the same place and pointed out the names of the streets, he couldn't, at that time learn them. When I first met him he was fifteen. Now Z has just turned 21 and he is just begun being able to travel by bus. That's progress. I began to wonder how he couldn't know the names of the local and major streets. One time at Spires, that was located along the major street nearest to his home, after eating he had to use the bathroom and I went out to the car to wait for him. When he didn't come out I went back in to look for him and he was standing there in a sweat, panicked, thinking that I had abandoned him. Panicky because it turned out he really didn't know how to get back home even though all he had to do was walk along the Blvd., but which way? So there was something neurologically wrong with his mind...not just defiant.

The more time I spent with him the more he opened up. He talked often of hating Mexicans because they were ruining the state. His best friend S and S's father hated Mexicans. Wanted to round them up and dump them across the border after working them over...like kicking a ball over the fence. He hated gays. There was a gay bar down the street from where he lived. He hated the way the gays would tease him when he walking by on his way to Taco Bell. He hated his teacher and his therapist because they were jerks and didn't care about him. "They're not committed to me, you'll see. They'll cut me loose like everyone else." He loved only his mom and his dead father, R. He loved and hated R, but don't bad mouth his dad to him. He'd punch you right now. Loyal. Another wonderful characteristic of Z. Totally loyal...easy to betray.

Yes, there were issues of serious problems with authority figures. Basically a long history of their betrayal, ridicule, and unfair treatment. ODD, damn't of course ODD. ODD is Oppositional Defiant Disorder as defined in the DSM IV. That's the diagnostic book used by Mental Health Licensed Professionals in pigeon holing some one so that they can then "know" how to treat them with drugs and therapy. Once the diagnosis is given, then services can follow. "Oh, you're ODD."

When I first took Z to fast food I was impressed with his manners and his sense of appreciation. He ordered reasonably and thanked me afterwards. I didn't really expect this from what I had read about Z in his chart. There it was all about his verbal and physical aggression, bizarre thought patterns, and his inability to maintain relationships. In fact both he and his mother were always very polite and appreciative.

Z and his mother had spent the last year taking care of his dying father in their one bedroom apartment. They had a hospital bed set up in the living room. As a war vet. he could have been placed in a military nursing home and then hospital, but to his mom and Z, that's not what happens to family. He wasn't the type to just die nicely. He was an active alcoholic and very abusive right up to the end. Maybe it was the head trauma that he experienced with a piece of shrapnel being imbedded in his brain. Maybe it was the way his full blooded Native American father beat him and made him feel like poop. K's grandfather was one of the first Ultimate Fighters long before there were Ultimate Fighters. Back room brawler, a barroom fighter...no gloves...kick ass all the way. Toward the last his dad wasn't able to get up, go to the bathroom, shower, or feed himself. Z did the lifting while his mother did the caring. No one in their extended family would help. Probably many reasons for that given the aggressive nature within the family. What was so disturbing to me was that none of the professionals with whom I work with could grasp the trauma of the experience that was experienced by Z. Z reported to me that they all said the same thing, "You've been mourning for a month. Yes it's sad, but you got to get over it and get on with your life." To K that was the same thing as saying, "Forget your dad," and to Z that was fighting words.

In the middle of the R's last year, his mom had to be hospitalized for a life threatening stomach problem, leaving Z home alone with all the responsibility of caring for his father. He told me that he was sure that she was going to die. "Then I would be all alone. Can't depend upon my half-brother or my father's mother, who live downstairs. They hate us." "That's not true," his mom would say. "You just play your music too loud." The professionals were not able to empathize and showed little sympathy. After his father passed, as stated above in his casefile, his special ed. teacher got down on him for being depressed, as Z put it, "Get over it and get on with your life." That teacher was so close to being put down. Z told me that he and his mother tried to commit suicide just after his dad died, a few weeks before I met them. He told me that they had tied ropes around their necks but it didn't work because they had tied the ropes to the shower curtain rod. A shower rod? What was so sad was that they really believed that hanging themselves from the shower rod would work. They were so shocked when they jumped off the edge of the bathtub that they pulled the rod down with them...rope with rod hanging at their waists.

The chart read that the mom was "chronically depressed." Was she? Depends upon whom she's with. That's what I found out. Sensitive, too sensitive, yes. She was very sensitive and could easily be hurt or be made to feel bad about herself. She once

told me about her father who abused her in all ways and at one point put her into a duffle bag, like a cat and dumped her into a lake...to drown. Someone saw. No charges. Her mother...well there are a lot of women who live with some very nasty men. Overwhelmed. Yes. Frightened. Yes. Anxious. Yes. Friendless, no. She belonged to a church, had strong religious convictions. Believe in hell, so attempting suicide must have been traumatic in how close she came to burning eternally. Open hearted, kind, generous, frugal, and somehow able to live with Z. I came to admire her...respect her also...and felt at times she inspired me in the way she could still keep love in her heart.

Z had a sleep disorder. A sleep disorder not in that he couldn't sleep, it was just that his sleep cycle started around 3 in the morning. Getting up for school was hell. He was taking Seroquel, a tranquilizer. "...but it doesn't really work when I take it too often." He did find that pot worked better. Z didn't have any limits in this arena either. He didn't take a hit or two; he related that he and his friend S could go through an ounce in 24 hours. Hmm, a pot smoking, racist, neurologically dysfunctional, fist fighting ghetto teenage superhero. Fun. Had to keep a first aid kit in my pocket so I could get immediate help should he turn it on me...not really. For some reason I really liked Z and he felt that and that was good.

He had enemies. There were four gangs in the neighborhood. Asian, Latino, Black, and Samoan. He felt like he was the only White guy on the street. I drove his hood. Yep, he was the only white guy on the street. Every week he was challenged, threatened, or attacked and each time with a smile on his face, saying, "Thank you" he would take them out being so pleased to have such a positive outlet for his frustration and anger. I must admit that over the years that I have been with Z I have had no positive influence on his aggression. Well, that's not entirely fair. He has promised not to get into any altercations while I'm with him.

At one point I had to tell him that I was considering keeping away from him as being a grandfather and wanting to spend some time with my grandchildren, I didn't want to be a victim of a drive by. I guess it was really my family that began to get on me for spending time with Z given his history of antagonizing every bad guy in the city. I shouldn't have told them about some of the challenges of my work...was I bragging. "Dad, you are doing what? Are you...oh yeah, forgot, sorry. But really, you got to stay away from Z...it's going to be sad to have your grandchildren visiting you at the cemetery." At some point I began to see their perspective. I mean they never kill the guy they're aiming at...it's always the innocent bystander that gets it. How would that be...going down because I was sitting at Carl's with Z having a big burger and fries? They do have the best fries. Anyway, he convinced me that he would be sure to take the bullet. I just hoped that the guys firing could spell his name right. Right name on the bullet, right target, right?

You might be wondering what I was doing with Z. Well, it's not every day one meets a real and true super hero. Mostly you meet them in the comics or movies. It never occurred to me that a SH could be a kid. It never occurred to me that one could be seriously emotionally injured so much so that it prevented him from fully emerging into the light. The world needs a real life superhero. I wanted to be a superhero when I was a kid, but it never happened. Wow, just imagine if I could lift the shroud off Z's shoulders, why the force of good might at last have a chance. Well, for a long time I was out to save the world. Couldn't do that, not because I hadn't discovered how to do it. No, it was that

the world had no interest in being saved. Then I thought maybe I could save my family...but no interest there. So, humbly and meekly, wish I could show that grin, I lowered my expectations to maybe "saving" one human life. I wasn't able to become a doctor, never wanted to anyway. I couldn't become a psychologist; couldn't stand school that much. It never actually crossed my mind. I wanted to take my whole life experience with the least structure and boundaries and just do good work. Felt that working at the lowest level was where the action was and where one was most influential. Now...having worked my whole life not to go up in society, but down, down, down...I was where I belonged. Something like the fantasy dwarf working in the mine. The mine, a place of darkness, heat, and struggle...not to a dwarf. To a dwarf a mine is like arriving in heaven...good and strong stone, nothing like it and full of treasures to be discovered. Maybe I'm a dwarf, but think that I'm a stand above ground guy. Something like the ugly duckling. Hang around ducks, become a duck. Unless it's a story, then one is a Swan...a member of the bird aristocracy...I hate the aristocracy...I'd rather be just a duck, just a dwarf, just a regular guy...but no...I'm not. I'm really just me. Who dat? Dat, that's who dat.

Anyway, I was on a journey into the sickness of humanity; that's what I meant by the world. Actually the world can take care of itself. When people piss it off enough she'll just do what she had to do, like with the dinosaurs. They just got too big for their own good. Big guys, bullies, bad guys just eating their way through life, too much crap, too much methane, and then with one too many farts, with the next lightning strike, Kaboom, roast dinosaur...extinction except for those in the water and those in their burrows. I don't mean that Z was sick...he was, but it wasn't the sickness that I wanted to wallow in, no I wanted to get to the cause.

When in Berkeley during the 60's Eldridge Cleaver (The Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party, before he became a Born Again Christian years later) told me, "We don't need your help. We don't need to be saved. We aren't the cause. You and yours are the cause. Go home...go home and take care of your own family. That's what will make things better. You want to help. We're just what draws you to the awareness of racism. Each kid works with their family and like that, racism is over. Now go and don't let us find your sorry good doing ass lingering around here. This ain't no place to linger." Or something like that." What ever it was, it hit me in the heart and off I went...lalalala. "Hey mom and dad, you the man. Got to stop this racism shit." It's funny but soon after that conversation my dad was taking me for a ride downtown, being nice...watch out now...and he started to let me in that I obviously needed a rest...too much stuff, a rest for a while...a place where I could do that and wouldn't even have to do my own laundry...but they did have medication and a nice group of people to hang out with while I tried to figure out the meaning of life. First stop light, out and gone. Back to the promised land...Berkeley. It's amazing how big the small town of Berkeley can be. Not even Oakland...nope, just Berkeley. Well that's another story. Stories are cool.

Actually I admired Z. Yeah I was there to help him but he was here also to help me and I shared that, and how important he was to me...to help me figure out how to be really helpful in changing things so that his life could be better. It was important to share that our working on his problems could also help me improve my life. Like a team!

The great thing about working with crazy kids is that then it's ok for me to be who I am. I am just older than they are...ok more experience, but nothing I've done has

particularly diminished the cause; I'm just not adding to it...well that's something isn't it? "Z, how are we going to get out of this thing? You're in it, and stuck. I come to visit you in your sticky stuff, but I can get up and leave. I wonder how? Teflon, baby, Teflon. You know, life is kind of like In-N-Out Burger...in and out, burger in hand...not stuck, just in and out. Get some, get gone. Get too much, it owns you...you got to carry it around you, you got so much, you can't get rid of all of it...some of it becomes that role that you carry under your belt. Never want to get stuck, can't get out...someone pull on you and while the top part of you liberates, the bottom part is being left behind...that ain't no way to get free. Well, it wasn't that I no longer had my legs. Well, was that worth it? I get out, but had to leave part of me behind. Sometimes that part people leave behind is to get out of their family. Went for a cigar...got my education...I'm out...not my family.

Z knew that intuitively. Get better, lose mom. She's stuck...too weak from exhaustion to move about, no way to pull her out without breaking her. So...I ain't going. "So, I guess you're going to cut out then. Can't save me...then what do I do for you...like everyone else. Right? HmMMM. HmMMMMMM.

Ahhhhhhhhhh. Scratch, Spit, Scratch more...

"Well, Z, you know the great thing about life is just when you think you know everything, something or someone comes along that just doesn't fit in with everything and everyone else. That be me. Not splitting, I'm not cutting out; the only out I'm going to do is to continue to hang out, if you don't mind that is. I like you and I like your mom. That's what!"

Mind blowing. That's one of the great things I learned in my years in Berkeley. There is a wonderful satisfaction of being a Master Mind Blower. Used to be, mind blowing was like mine blowing. Not too good for the brain stuff. Well, it was, but it took so damn long to put the brain matter back into its right place. It wasn't hard to shove it all back inside. It was the wiring. Man you think a telephone Junction Box looks complicated, you know, the one's...the gray box with the telephone guy sitting there on his fold out chair, with a million wires that are a tangle...um, let's see...the red one goes here, and white one over there, the brown one, somewhere, and the black one, can't find that one...oh there it is near the yellow one...wait that's not telephone wires...that's people, like wires in a box, that people we live with but apart. Oh crap. What am I talking about? Oh yeah, the point where I realized that Z couldn't be saved because his mother was an anchor and she required him in her life to be more in hurt than she so that she could have a good reason to live...to care for him. That's how he was brought up. To help provide for the family through his mental illness. Keep that SSI money coming in to help pay the expenses. Get better, lose the SSI money. Lose the SSI money and the family would be homeless. Hope eternal...I guess so because you never can know the future...It was a good amount of time before I came to accept that reality...get better, be homeless. What would you do in this circumstance?

"I'm not leaving my mom to suffer."

"OK, Z, OK."

What's it like to be brought up in a home where to contribute to the family you have to mess up? Where you get your ass kicked for losing a fight, or for not getting into a fight that you should have. Where your dad turns you onto booze and pot before you're out of third grade. Where you get rewarded for disrupting your class. Where your early

school years are spent in special ed. classes, and your middle year classes at non-public schools for the seriously emotionally disturbed where what you learn is how to give shit, and to kick butt. How to take on anyone who you feel is looking at you. How to run the dozens, street rap to make someone piss in their pants, to strike out at you so you can say they took the first swing. Where your status comes from being the toughest, slyest, quickest with your words and fists, and where you learn that you are a hopeless fuck-up. That's the training ground, one step removed from Juvie. Yeah, there's a lot to learn there, but Z never had to visit, come and go, no he lives it.

Ever walk a neighborhood where every family is on the verge of suicide and murder? The narrowness of this life is incredible. I mean not even knowing the names of the major intersection even when you live only one block away. What happens to the mind in this neighborhood? The whole world is only one's block...not the next...that there, hostiles lurking...that not your world, that's their world. Walk to the liquor store for a soda and the \$1.25 is radiating signals to the rats to come and feast. Sorry to the real rats...didn't mean you. Can you believe that Z's mom gets stopped by the police? She's just going to the market across the street to buy vegetables at the Korean market and the cops pull her over and demand her I.D. She's forty-seven and they're asking her about her gang affiliations...just because she's wearing a sweatshirt with a hood drawn up because it's cold. Gang affiliations at forty-seven, walking with a limp, small too. It's easy to understand Z's hate of the boys in blue. Harassing his mother...just don't mess with my mother...and when you do and I can't do anything about it man to man, then I just got to hate you for being safe because I can't reach you. Chicken...Just like the teachers who play like they really care about you...but when you are hurting so bad inside and growl an answer, got to be consequences...leading to resentment for betrayal...you should have known how messed up I am inside...and resentment leads to the external stuff...messing up, giving crap, losing stuff, thrown chalk pieces, graffiti, well you know the drill. Teacher's hate to feel inadequate...especially Special Ed. Teachers...who are there because they care so much...help them; love them...can't reach them...flake. He doesn't want my help. To hell with him. There are plenty of kids who do. It's a tough job, being a savior...so often no saving, no respect, no resurrection of the child's inner worth...they work to be defeated...got to be who they were raised to be. Not true...just a frustrated point of view.

What did Z do wrong...got born. What did his father and mother do wrong? Got born too. That's all. Got born and booted around from birth...

"That's all true, but because it's your life, you got to take responsibility for it from here on out. You can do it. *I'm here for you.* Listen...I'm here for you. But you got to do it."

"You going to teach me how?"

"You Bet!"

"You going to be there when I go to the liquor store for a soda and on the way someone tries to put it on me?"

"Put it on you?"

"Yeah, like 'Your money or your life.' type of put it on you."

"Well," scratch, "Um," scratch the other side...Ah, no... but you can do it. Yes you can. You just got to make up your mind. That's all it takes. You can do anything you put your mind to."

“AAAhhhh, like I can do anything I want to. All I have to do is make up my mind. Man, I thought by now you’d have figured out that I don’t got no mind. Here, I said here. Look into my ear. What do you see? No Thing. There ain’t anything in there...its gone...used to have it...not now, my dad beat it all out of me. Told me from the beginning the thing that screws up things is being able to think about it. The whole point of being an alcoholic is so that you don’t have to think about it. That’s where the pain and loss is. Thinking about it. So, no...it’s not, ‘All you got to do is believe in yourself. All you got to do is try. All you got to do is not give up.’ You don’t live in me. You don’t live near me. You and I visit but in the end you go home to your world and leave me in mine. Right?”

“Uhhhh.”

Why doesn’t Z know the name of the streets? Does this mean anything? Does this mean something? How can a kid live in the same neighborhood for years and not know the names of the streets at a major intersection one block from his apartment? How could he not know direction? Z didn’t know east, west, north, and south. Or this way or that? When I was attempting to encourage him to take the bus he couldn’t figure out which side of the street to stand on to go somewhere, and had no idea of how to calculate where to get off. I spent a good amount of time pointing out landmarks...when you see this you know that your stop is coming up soon. Nope. He was a great passenger, but wouldn’t go anywhere alone, and for good reason, he didn’t know where he was. I used to spend time with his mom telling her he’s never going to learn if you keep going with him...but she knew better. He could look, just not see. No time/spatial function; that’s what you need to know where you are. Things don’t fit together for Z. They are just a bunch of disjointed points...no design, no structure, and no boundaries...and that is a good description of how he experiences life. Aggression makes sense...the only safeguard that works to keep people away, away from engaging with him. You can’t figure on anyone being there tomorrow, may as well get rid of them today. Why suffer the pain? “Dad was right.”

Yes, Z had people he hung out with...usually one person being the main one...like S. None of his relationships ever held together until he met S and his schizophrenic life...kind of fit Z’s. I had a kid who liked to watch the grunge flicks, you know, for laughs on the window facing the street, with patrons seated eating two feet away, to drop your pants, plaster your butt on the window and take a dump while videoing it. Laughs. Z and Steve found it funny to go into a place of business fart like crazy after eating a can of beans and pull the fire alarm while screaming murder. Crank calls. Piss in soup. He’d look at me when telling me these escapades into insanity and found the fact that I couldn’t laugh, the funniest thing ever. Still, in all the years that I have spent with Z he has always treated me with respect. I like that.

We’ll for the first year I spent time with him because that was my job. I had goals, methods of achieving them, but all were ineffective. What was not ineffective was relationship building. Z and I built a relationship. I believed at that time that with the building of a relationship healing commences. I did, but not in ways that counted for my job or my supervisors. To the job, it was In and Out. Four months. If they weren’t close to recovery after four months, they’re flakes. “Flakes” is a word that professional mental health people use when they are ineffective in their delivery of service and to protect their sense of self-worth, the reason for their ineffectiveness is that Z is a “flake.” After a

number of months I began to inquire about his relationship with his dad. He had already told me a lot about his dad, but in all the abuse stories he never once criticized or complained about the treatment. Rather he spoke of his dad as a sense of pain and humiliation. Stand up to that and even if you are in a tiger cage...no biggie. Tiger cages are where the Viet Cong stuck downed USA pilots to rot and suffer big time. I wonder what people have to experience in order to treat someone that way. I wondered what his dad suffered. I never criticized his dad...I knew intuitively that should I do that, especially during the formative months of our relationship, he'd handle this conflict by knocking it OUT. Stamp it when it's down, crush it, break it up, like a bug when the foot slams it into juice...no form...no recognition, no longer a visual cue as to its threat. Vanished...out of sight...out of mind. Now, how am I going to change that in Z? At that time...that was my job. Work on his image of his dad...slowly, calmly, and most importantly safely so he doesn't blow me out of our relationship.

Well, the stories of my dad and brother were the lever that eased him gradually away from having to clutch his dead dad as a hero when in reality, the guy who was his core of strength and stability was a wacked out, brain injured, abusive, violent, vulgar and self-destructive, mistreated and abused as a child, Vet. He used to ask me how I could still choose to relate to my dad and older brother. He had an older brother whom he loved deeply, but who had been raised by the same father, and his way of coping was to keep Z at arms length. Very similar to my brother. When I met his brother it was a bit scary. He didn't seem to be sane...a crazy smile, stood just a bit too close, bulging eyes, and not too clear in what he was trying to say. He's like the people who really love you when they are stoned, but only when they are stoned...and have no memory of their fond feelings, except subconsciously, and that subconscious memory overwhelms them, again with the reactive attachment, causing them to turn on you, viewing the intimacy of the previous evening as too upsetting to allow, so they turn on you and rip you, and cause a conflict so that they can eliminate you from their life...too vulnerable = got to strike out at you. That was his brother...twisted Z's emotions into a knot. I love him and hate him. That's rough on the nervous system. Causes all sorts and levels of problems.

As he began to sympathize with me for my history of my relationships with the males in my family, he began to have moments of empathy that led to lightening quick insights into his true relationship with his dad. Quick and I just nodded...no words...too soon for those. He did want to know how I could keep relating to my brother and father, and so I spoke of my work in mental health as a way of keeping myself safe and sane. To be more exact, to keep in a state of accepting my insanity. Honestly. Probably cut me out of his life, and quick...knuckles, nose meet number one knuckle, followed by a crew of knuckles. His dad was sacred. Now why does a son feel that way? It seemed to me that his whole pattern of destructive and aggressive behavior was in honor of his dad. To me it was as though he was imprisoned within a cocoon of his dad's making. Bad as bad can be. But also good in his badness; like I said he used his skills to protect those he liked and the weak, even when he didn't know them.

I began to speak of my father...a little bit of this and that. He soon understood that while we had different fathers they had a certain similarity. Can't do good enough. How do you love someone who steps on you and resents your growth? You either hate him or idolize his viciousness. You either reject everything he stands for or you emulate every behavior, thought, and impression. Two faces of a coin. Z and I. In a lot of ways

my brother was like Z. So I told him about my brother's emulation of our father and Z took my side. He's loyal. I never said anything about his view of his father; just let the stories about my family do the work. The big difference between Z and me at his age was that he was a warrior and I was a poet. He kicked back at his father and I slipped out of my father's reality. Z's spirit wasn't broken down, just his mind. My spirit was broken, but not my mind. What was broken in both of us, at the same age, was the ability to form and maintain relationships.

Psychologically it's called Reactive Attachment Disorder. Attachments are sought, however once arriving at the goal, they quickly become too threatening to maintain because of the vulcanized anxiety that erupts...when is the pain going to come...when am I going to disappoint them...when are they going to get rid of me...how am I going to cope again with another loss. And if things are going well, that is a freak out trigger. Can't handle the positive experience...my nervous system isn't capable of handling the increasing load of love without short circuiting. Get to that point, pull the switch. BLAM!!!! It's over...what a relief...disconnect, end of threat.

I feel that's one of the reasons that Z is so powerful at the point of when he hits someone. He just wants to get it over with NOW. Finish it. Can't stand the conflict. Get rid of You, be mean. Who isn't nuts living in this culture? Why do people assume that their brains are wired for fast change? The brain is definitely not wired for fast change. Just look at the young people all whizzes to us older folks on computers, phones that act like computers, My Space, Face Book, Twitter...Texting...multitasking at light speed. Ever watch an older person watch a younger person flick through the computer screen at a speed far quicker than the brain of the older person can process. It's funny...but not too funny. Not funny to me, funny to my children. It's a switch. They are younger and have less experience, however because of the new technology they are in control, and in that control are making mistakes quicker with less ability to correct them before they are put into operation. There is not just a generation gap, there is a language gap...there isn't just a language gap, there's a complete gap in the connecting neuronets between illusion and reality, between computer generated reality and life itself...the one that the sun actually comes up in the east, and clouds actually drop rain, and people can get hungry and not have anything to eat for days, with bulging eyes and stomachs, heads rolling to the side, to weak to hold it up, and bones so clear against the skin, even when black, so white and flaky...Games that simulate reality, games that simulate simulations, games that teach kids how to fly fighter planes then as adults they are flying drones and dropping bombs on real people only their brains don't see real people just simulations on the computer screen...and one day to be doing dog fights from the computer screen and see, we don't get hurt when we blow lives away...into real life and wonder how come the person I'm with isn't doing as I programmed? Must be something wrong with the simulation...
DELETE.

"Z, you can't just go into a store and fart, and pull the fire alarm and laugh about it. What happens to the workers, the customers, the owner?"

"Z, you can't just get down with a girl. She's got to be tested for HIV...so do you. Got to use a condom...You have to."

"Don't use a condom, cause I can't feel it when I do. And about going into the stores with S...get a sense of humor. What's life about if you can't laugh?"

Too many hours playing video games! Reality just doesn't feel real. The great

thing about illusion is it protects you from feeling what's real. Good idea I guess when things get to be too much. Too much reality...too much to live with...don't want to get into that head.

I told him I knew when I was about his age that I was messed up. Later I learned that I could learn about myself by working with emotionally troubled youth. I couldn't accept help...I couldn't stand the "time's about up" sessions that I tried once or twice. "What do you mean, times up...I'm sitting here because I'm freaking out. What are you going to do, kick me out of your office?" No, I couldn't take that help...it just made me so pissed off and wanting to make the therapist hurt so that they could get the meaning of detachment when detachment increases despair. Now, how is being treated with such detachment therapeutic with someone experiencing an attachment disorder? Z felt that.

At one point I had a vision...watch out for visions. I realized that until I worked things out with my father I could never have a sound relationship with my son. I had one son at that time, later another one. Anyway, without going into that story, the outcome was made clear when my father and mother began laughing at me. It was about five years after I went back into our relationship that I told them that I uprooted my family and relocated so I could be near to him and to work it out. He finally stopped laughing only to say what a fool I was, and that I couldn't be so stupid and be his son...because no one in their right mind gives up everything to "make it right with his parents." He turned to my mother and growled...were you messing around before you had him?" My mother worshipped my father...best approach when you live with a megalomaniac, a narcissistic man...his momma's little man. I AM the man. That's my dad.

My father's dad died when he was four. He was a window washer. His safety belt broke nine stories up. Damn, my father had an attachment disorder in a big way with family, so did my mom. Great friends to anyone outside the family. Anyone inside the family, including the whole extended family were the enemy...they could hurt you in your heart. They could die and leave you and this would be just one more since his father abandoned him, betrayed and deserted him through death. One day he left for work and never came back.

I asked him later, years later, "I wonder how you felt as a four year old to lose your dad." He couldn't touch the feeling and had no intention on doing so. In fact he became verbally aggressive and in building up his own fury, told me to get out. The mask was so tight for so long he didn't know any longer that he wasn't the mask...each time he looked into the mirror he just saw himself as he wanted the world to see him...#1. Of course to be #1 when you're not, you got to get rid of anyone who says to the contrary. "Love me is to tell me what I need to hear." So, by asking him about his feelings he felt like I was attacking him, attempting to strip him of his sense of self, and rendering him as vulnerable as a four year old who loses his father. Who in their right mind dwells on the incidents of trauma...they just initiate the defenses...I guess I had a good reason to do so as feelings expressed by him were completely absent and what son, no matter how old, doesn't want and need some affirmation of his importance through even the slightest demonstration of his father's trust of him. You don't share your feelings with someone you don't trust. I guess that's why trust is such a big issue in my life.

I came to the insight that when one experiences childhood trauma the defenses against the buried pain being brought to the surface will cause the person thereafter to fabricate an enemy out of even his own child. Much safer to limit the vulnerability that

was never dealt with. It's inside but hidden and my father's whole life was to create an illusion of reality that was a barrier from the intrusion of love and shared care...the ultimate enemy that unveils your illusion and renders you infantile and totally open to having one's sacred feelings exposed. That's how the poison of trauma resides deep in each of us. The poison subtly transforms perception and in doing so the person views the poison as the hero, the knight that keeps out the enemy...love. Love and you get hurt. Control that feeling and limit the pain. The honest lesson of trauma. As I told Z of this he took a break from his mask and tears came into his eyes, but he couldn't say anything...at the time. I mean he couldn't say anything about his own pain of living with and being there at the end of his father's life. He did relate how messed up life is for me to have experienced my father in this way. He was and continues to be right. Z can be very empathetic, just not toward himself.

I decided to help Z learn the names of streets and how to get places. To do so I started taking Z to locations he was used to being taken to such as music outlets, fast food locations, the clinic, the library near his clinic. One day I was taking him around and he had to get to the clinic for a meeting. When we pulled into the parking lot and began to look for a parking spot, another car began to pull into the parking lot also. As it drove by Z suddenly began to swear, threw his upper body out the window and began to curse the passing car. I grabbed Z by the pants and pulled him back into the seat.

"Bunch of fucking beaners. Did you see them? They were looking at us. Motherfuckers...I'll show them cowards. Always in a group, never just man to man...I don't care; I'll fuck them all up. I'll show them what a man is."

"Z, you the man. But what happened? They just drove by. How could you see through the reflection of their windows who they were looking at?"

"They were looking at me. Don't you know what that means? Dissing me, dissing me. No one looks at you, not unless you mean it as a challenge. That's the way it is around here. They were fucking looking at me."

"Z, we're at the mental health clinic going to your meeting. What am I going to say to the other people who are meeting with us, 'Z isn't with me? I mean he was, but now he isn't. He still in my car. He won't come out. I mean he can't. His fat butt is stuck in my window. Didn't even slow down enough to open the door. Forgot he weighs 260 lbs. Had to get out of the car quick...some guys were in their car looking also for a parking spot, but then Z thought that they looked at him. You know. He explained it to me, 'They dissed me.'" Z looked at me, his bulging eyes wide, the foam from his mouth dripping onto his shirt, his face red, then he opened his mouth and out of it came the most wonderful sound of laughter I've ever heard, especially because there was a good chance that he was about to help me understand the power of the fist for challenging him. I laughed also...a good deal out of relief, but you know I wasn't afraid of Z. I like him. I like his spirit, I did from the first moment I met him. Just a bit out there you understand...past the planets, moving freely, but just disconnected. That was the make or break point for us. Humor. He was a bit like the weasels in Roger Rabbit. You get them laughing, you got them. Z was a great humorist. His humor was demented but no matter how demented it usually was funny and laughter is wonderful if not at times embarrassing given my value system.

The problem of working with people in general is no different than the problem of living with them; except it's from the other side of the coin. When you work in the

mental health field you are supposed to be detached. The relationships are all time limited, so if you get really attached, it hurts bad when you are required to stop. When you are in a personal relationship you want to become attached, but how often does it end, and then you have all that pain that you haul off with you into your next relationship. In a professional relationship that's why you aren't supposed to get attached, so that you don't carry that pain into your relationships with your next client. Detached, No Pain. Of course this isn't really possible, to be in a relationship without attachment. Even if you "don't allow yourself to get attached," you are still attached to not getting attached. It will definitely affect the relationship. When a professional decides to follow the code of detachment, it is like getting on a train to a life of burn-out. The effort of not becoming attached to people and their life experiences is exhausting and demoralizing, and in the end destructive to the human gift of being able to relate. It's one of the worst self-destructive paradoxes that exist in life and specifically so for those who work in the mental health field. The very effectiveness of affecting another person's life is based upon human endeavor, not computerized interfacing.

What a hurt person needs in order to heal is to experience the successful commitment in a relationship, not a prescription of interventions of things and thoughts that they are supposed to develop from the "wise" sayings of the therapist. The healing can take place only when one experiences directly the commitment of someone who isn't supposed to commit. It is only by being willing to jeopardize something that one values such as one's professional standing that truly communicates commitment. "You are important enough to me for me to be willing to help you to the level that I am prohibited from." Then healing will result. Not just a bunch of words of what's supposed to be.

But no. It's not allowed, except for those who risk all to do it right, and those are the people who affect healing in others. Now healing doesn't mean they get better in general; it just means that when they are with the healer they function at a higher level. Whether they can carry that ability into their personal relationships means that the other people in their experiences are open to a healthier interaction. This rarely happens. It does, but rarely. I was the only professional that Z and his mom allowed into their home. All the other meetings with professionals took place at the clinic. However, in time, when I demonstrated that I was safe this did eventually open the door to others. But not successfully. They all came, told, instructed, provided, and then split. Their services were time limited as was their personal commitment. Professional. Get it. Commitment for only as long as the time is paid. Stop the pay, stop the commitment. Time limited. The lesson...to a frightened and distrustful youth...abandonment, no one stays. The people who can create opportunity, safety, change...not in our neighborhood.

"Not for us who live along the freeway, with the freeway's aroma of gas and diesel fumes wafting into our windows...prime carcinogens...the only thing they haven't done is dome us in with the exhaust running...slower this way, but no less effective. Wonder what it does to our minds, never mind our bodies? Say, when are you leaving?"

Z's mom is a saint. It took me a while to figure that out. I always had a good feeling about her, and I know I communicated that as she kept allowing me to come into her home. She suffered from chronic depression. She had every right to be depressed, and I knew that and she knew that I didn't judge her because of it. I learned from my second wife to experience the best in people, no matter how they behaved. It took me a long time to grasp that concept, but it happened, and it allows me entry into people's lives that are

closed to others. Her home was her pride and it was a catastrophe. That's what happens to wonderful people who are overwhelmed through the weight of life and its traumas. Crushed. She was under such weight, but she was still there. Crushed but not fully broken. OK. How to start lifting off the blocks of weight without injuring her?

Then, how much of the weight was Z? How much of the crazy making of Z was a result of who his mom was? I had already got a feeling for the role of his dad with Z. However, I had not developed any sense of the affect that his dad had on his mom. What was her role while Z's dad was doing his thing on Z? How did Z perceive his mom in the manner in which she responded to his dad's abuse? She stood up to him, but she wasn't always around or in time. A chipmunk face to face with a bear...no backing down... "You will not eat me or my young. Back off you big oaf."

Z told me that last thing his dad asked of him was to make sure that he took care of his mother and protected her. This is difficult to write about in a good way. When I first started visiting, Z was often draped over his mom. When sitting next to her he was leaning on her with his arm around her shoulders, saying, "My little mom." When he was standing next to her he was leaning into her with his arm around her neck and over her shoulder, with his hand on or under her breast. He wasn't doing anything with his hand, it was just there. She just remained in that posture with him, not acknowledging either his body posture or the position of his hand. Grasping this without judgment. Just grasping the visuals. "My dad's last request was for me to take his place." Z's mind isn't like mine...it's an incredible mind, and yet wired as we all are, in his own unique manner. Well, his mind is a bit further out. Most people, not including me, are wired somewhat differently, but still within a band of normality. That accounts for individual identity and personality. Yes in the majority of people their wiring varies a bit, but is within a narrow enough range to be viewed as normal. Others of us however, are wired beyond this range, and the norm views us as aberrant, different, strange, bizarre, and ultimately frightening.

Some of us who are wired beyond the normal range develop into cultural heroes. They are the most popular artists, sports figures, politicians, financiers, and giants of morality and religious fervor who generally support the values of the dominant culture. That's the One reason they are supported and elevated into hero status. Then there are the exceptional cultural heroes who are not initially recognized as being useful to their society. These are the courageous and dedicated people who marched in Selma, Alabama for civil rights, who led demonstrations to stop the Wars, who formed race awareness in the minority communities such as the Black Panthers. These people not only had a conscience, but were willing to act upon their conscience to improve society's function. They were very concerned about human values of compassion and sharing resources, however they are viewed by the then majority society as a threat to "common decency."

Then there are others who have the same wonderful traits as those described above who are never recognized, who do not succeed in their efforts to contribute to their society, and who are successfully repressed and attacked by the society and these people often collapse and as a result of the rejection by society develop into demons that seem to threaten the very foundation of society, if not civilization. That's what happens to heroes that can't get recognition...that are put down for their heroic courage to say, to do what needs to be done while everyone is screaming, "Don't!!!" These heroes can be turned to the "Dark Side." Not by their intent, but by human nature. I mean just check out what happens to artists that can't get recognition...insanity. What happens to naturally born

warriors and leaders...jail. Society has room only for what supports society's goals and illusions.

To me, Z's mind was a new and fascinating configuration of disjointed and misarranged life views that undermined every effort he made to integrate and to be useful. He was raised in insanity and yet was asked to function within society. This led to special schools and disappointed and frustrated special education teachers that ultimately just reinforced how out of step Z lived his life.

Touching his mom's breast then became a fondle and a squeeze. Still with her not responding at all. Each time I spent with Z I took him to get something to eat at the same place. It became our office. We went to the same place every time, if not for a burger then for a drink. He came to understand that it was our "business" time; time to talk about stuff to justify my spending time with him. After all, I met him because I am a professional and I get paid to do professional stuff. I also did that stuff when not at the restaurant, but in a less recognizable fashion. He began to share what it meant to him to be told by his dad's last dying words, "Take my place. Take care of your mom. Protect her." I was very surprised to listen to Z's insight into what his dad meant. To him, it meant to become her husband. To be the head of the family. To take his dad's place. In taking his dad's place she was to do for him what she did for her husband.

"Z, I'm not sure that's what your dad meant."

"It isn't?"

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure what I mean, I need to get a better feeling for what I mean."

"OK, let me know."

"Sure."

What did I mean? I knew what I meant; I just didn't know how to say what I meant. I mean I know how to say the words, I just wasn't confident that I would say them in a way that would work for Z. I decided instead to speak with his mom. After all, a man does what a man will do, until his woman tells him no. Or at least that's what I've heard from women who seem to know the minds of men. Of course there's got to be exceptions, but I'm not sure we're in area of one of those exceptions. Did his mom accept Z's role and all that comes with it? I didn't really want to know, except for that which was observable couldn't be ignored. Could it? So what, Z has his hand on his mom's breast, a little fondle a little squeeze, a kiss on the cheek with her standing immobilized. Was it victimization that accepts in shock that there is no escape, and because there is no escape, just let it be? It hurts less.

I felt that I was going to take a big chance about losing my relationship with Z and his mom should I go ahead and bring up the subject. Then again, if I didn't, what was I getting paid for? I met with her while Z was in school. Often he wasn't. Just slept through the bus. But on this day he did get on the bus. I spent time visiting before bringing up what I had been witness to and inquired of her as to how I should respond to it. She reacted by dropping her head to her chest, bowed over, slumped rather...indrawing, not just withdrawing. She stayed that way for too long. I got nervous.

"It's something we need to talk about."

Subhearing whisper, "I know. I'm afraid. You don't know what he can be like. It's too much for me. It's all too much for me. I'm a good person, a good Christian

woman. Just, you know...you can't believe the suffering that Z and I have gone through. I had to take care of my husband R immediately after my stomach surgery because Z and his brother weren't able to help. They were here, but they left him to me. How? I just came home. I needed caring for. There was no one. No one. He was crapping in his pants, vomiting, couldn't stand up. Me, just home from surgery with stitches, pain...and I took care of him and Z and myself. It was horrible."

I was shocked. I had an earlier hernia surgery that resulted in something that wasn't right and the pain...no I couldn't imagine getting home from the hospital after abdominal surgery and have to be up and about taking care of an invalid adult family member.

"How did you manage that?"

"There was no one else. That's what I had to do and so I did it. There were other family members like I said, but none of them cared to help. His brothers live in the area. His mother-in-law lives downstairs. No one from church. Nor his sons, as I've said. Just me."

"You're lucky you didn't end up back in the hospital." That's all I could say at first.

"When R died I had no one but Z. Z wants to take his place, but he doesn't know how to do much. Can't work, can't shop, can't cook, can't clean, can't drive, can't listen, can't, can't, can't...but he's here and that means I'm not alone. I got to do what I got to do just like I did with R."

"Yes, you got to do what you got to do however I'm not sure that what you are doing is what you got to do. It's going to cause Z further emotional problems; it already is. Z isn't R, he's your son. He's in trouble as you are. You both are wonderful in the way you managed to survive this past year. Still you are both kind of drowning and you've got your arms around each other in despair, but that's what's going to drown you in the end. You got to get to shore, and shore is real. That's why you've got to be the one who places boundaries for him. He's loose, lost, and confused. He needs to have structure, limits, and a sense of who you are so that he can remember who he is. You're his mother, he's not your husband even though Z thinks in his special way, that's what R told him to be when he imposed the edict that Z takes his place after he passes. Z is tough. He can handle the truth. You just have to find the strength to help him find it again. I'll also help. That's why I'm speaking to you rather than reporting it. I'm not going to report this unless you can't make the decision and act on it to help Z remember he's your son. People do what they have to do to survive an immediate threat. That threat happened. You're still alive. The question for Z and for you is what are you going to do now that you're still here? You have to take the lead, then he'll know where to go."

That's what I missed in this. At the time, Z was here (in reality) more than his mom and Z was barely here. I missed it for a long time and now that I've got it, well that's why I'm writing this. There are times that we live with what we've missed, what we don't get, maybe what we can't get. We think that we got it, but inside we feel that we don't; it's just that it is too deep inside to get. We get discouraged not about what we're doing on the external side of things, but deep inside we aren't getting it and that sets a numb feeling of denial into place...essential to keep going even when we can't get anywhere. Hey, it's the process not the result. True and Not True. It's great to believe that when we are trapped and can't get loose...have to believe that, Yes, I can. The

impossible is impossible until it isn't. That's me. Go for it regardless of what people are saying about it not being possible. I learn a great deal even when I can't realize the goal...therefore the process is what's it's all about. Just hit me. Maybe there is something about the goal that isn't too healthy...never thought about the goal in that way. Could that be why the Lord defeated the people's effort in Babel to build the tower into the heavens...not supposed to do that, not because the idea is bad, but because maybe if they did get close to the goal, it's like getting too close to the power of nuclear energy...zap. But externally, it's hard to be aware of the reality, when the reality is too demoralizing. Got to change the way I look at it. But, when I don't yet know all of this, as I didn't when I was getting involved with Z, his mom and R's ghost, who had already passed away except continued to live in what Z and his Mom remembered and believed...then...well. This is what this is about. For me too.

You ever wake up knowing that you are going to get your butt beat. Maybe because you did something and they were just too tired last night to do anything about it. But they will today. Well, when it's because of something you did, yeah getting a butt whooping isn't good, but it's definitely not as bad as getting your butt whooped because the whooper feels like whooping and your butt is the place that whoo pings happen. Damn, that isn't only not good; it's bad and not the kind of Black cultural baaaad that's good. Well this also took me a long time to figure that out about how Z feels every morning he get's up. I don't mean that he's actually going to get his butt whooped. By the time I met Z that wasn't any longer possible. I mean no one could whoop Z. R was gone, his mother never did, and all of the men in the world learned that mess with Z it wasn't his butt that was getting whooped. No. When there was butt whooping it was coming from Z. The amazing thing is that in the six years that I have been relating to him there are still people who come up to Z to get their butts whooped. He never loses. Z should get paid. He's that good. Need your butt whooped...go find Z. "Hey man, you need your butt whooped. Z's on the corner. Get over there and get your whooping. If you're going to get whooped may as well have it done by the best."

Z had a high school teacher who was going to get Z in his class after summer vacation. The man did the right thing and made every effort to establish a positive relationship with Z during the summer. Taking him places, introducing him to his family and took him on family outings. He couldn't have done more. When school started the teacher was in the best position to really be supportive and encouraging and the relationship was in place for it to be received...but no. Outside of school. Yes. Inside of school. No. There was something about when Z crossed the line between the street and school. All of the bad feelings that Z had experienced with every teacher descended upon him like a permanent in progress Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PSDT). Every teacher since the beginning found Z to be too much and too much not in an endearing manner as sometimes happens. Many good teachers like the "bad boys." They just need Tender Loving Care, (TLC). Now there is no worse feeling than to be really good at what you do and along comes a kid or a person who tears that down and tramples it into the ground. I mean the teachers "should" have known that Z wasn't doing it out of a personal vendetta, but rather he was doing it out of distress and trauma.

I once had a supervisor who overall I liked in a real positive manner however as in all people she had certain irritating personality traits. We all do. One was that she expected me to respond immediately to the buzzer on my beeper. First of all I hated

carrying it, and I usually didn't. Left it in my car. Figured because the beeps were never emergency related, rather just questions that could be answered later in the day, I didn't need to respond to it. That really pissed her off. I beep, you answer. Of course I never did. Ok, I know how she felt when I failed to be more highly responsive. Frustrating. Still my personality can't stand having a leash attached to my neck. I told that to her when I went to the initial interviews. "

I will be your best worker after I learn the ins-and-outs of the job. I like to be supervised during that phase. I like to improve and be the very best I can be...without joining the military."

What I should have taken more seriously was that she was in love with the military and she was never better than when she was at Camp Pendleton introducing me to Division Commanders as part of my job was recruiting local military for our volunteer program. She was a charmer with majors and colonels. I admired her. What I am saying, love the military, probably act like the military. Control, orders, and the joy of when subordinates follow those orders whether right or wrong.

"Whoops, sorry about that. You were right, we should have gone left when I ordered everyone to go right. Oh well. Can't get it right all the time. The mine field took me by surprise too." Medivaced, Huey carrying us out of the fire zone...my left arm in agony from what no longer was there. "At least we're going through it together. Sorry about your arm. What, no pain no gain."

One time she came to the conclusion that I couldn't right a coherent letter. Now, I had been a Master's degreed graduate from an Ivy League College...so what? I agree, but still I got the degree, must have been doing something with writing. I ran poetry and creative writing workshops. Started and coordinated a school newspaper. Anyway, she felt it was time for me to go to a Jr. College extension course on writing. While I was going...I quit after two classes, she returned one of my letters...she insisted on editing all outgoing correspondence...all marked up with red underlying ink, cross outs, inclusions, etc. I took that marked up letter and with a deep sense of appreciation redid the letter with all her changes in place, and sent it out. Two months later she came across the letter and was deeply disappointed in me as the writing class had no positive affect on me. She returned that letter all marked up with red: under and over lining, cross outs and inclusions and told me to develop the ability to write a professional letter. Now according to this story that I'm telling you, the second editing was done on her own first editing. I called her. I spoke in a quiet and friendly tone. I related to her the sequence of editing. That was the end of that. For some reason she kept me as an employee. No more editing, no more beepers going off. Just left alone.

Anyway just imagine a five year old starting out on his school career, already knowing how to read. Just because of a few comments he muttered under his breath to five peers who were trying to intimidate him, and whom he dispatched with five blows, there they were bloody and grounded...the teacher viewed Z as a maniac. Now, where did Z get this special skill? R. He was just trying to make his daddy proud and R, from his own upbringing was just being a good dad.

"Good going son, kicked their asses did you? Hmm, where's that can? Got it." Guzzle, burp, "Just remember, anytime anyone kicks your ass, ass kicking will recommence when you get home. Understand. Now, what was I saying, yeah, I remember. I'm proud of you. Five to one; damn fine."

To Z he couldn't understand the fear in his teacher's eyes. After all he started kindergarten already knowing how to read. That should mean something. Well the first grade teacher heard about Z from the Kindergarten teacher, and the second grade teacher heard about Z from the first grade teacher and it wasn't past then when Z gave up on his academic journey and his career just became pissing off the teachers. So, by the time Z met up with this great special ed. teacher who was also the head of the high school wrestling team, and at the time one of his team was in his class with Z, it wasn't long before conflict between Z and the team guy was jumping off. Top Dog Thing, you know! Now, in the beginning the teacher tried to side with Z, but you know in Z's world he didn't need anyone to side with him, he was out for bear. I've always wanted to use that phrase. "Back off. This is between me and Jimmy. I'll take care of this during recess." Now what was this two hundred and twenty pound young wrestling coach able to do? I know what he would have liked to do. Take Z to the mat. But he was a good man, and patient, but by halfway through the semester with getting lip numerous times a day because Z was in school to mess with anyone who had authority, the man began to crack. He finally came to the conclusion that what Z needed was for one of his peers to kick his ass and good. So he decided to instigate such an opportunity.

His best wrestler, the kid on his team, the kid in his class...the challenge was made...the day and time in the gym was set...fat Z against trained top flight number one, Ace in the hole, can't possibly lose, my boy...OK, on the count of three...Z is a berserker. He not only has native blood and 3rd generation from a kick ass stomping father and grandfather, he also must have Viking blood. Z was never "trained" in wrestling. Z is a fighter, not a player, not a count to three and you're out. "Hell, open your mouth to count to three and I'll tear your tongue out and roast it for wienies on a hot bun. Lots of ketchup, oh is that your blood, yummm." Well, I guess you've figured out what happens when a gym wrestler meets a street fighter. STILL THE UNDEPUTED AND UNDEFEATED CHAMPION.

Well, I'm trying to remember why I'm telling you all of this. Oh yeah, I remember. Getting up in the morning knowing you are going to get your butt beat and you didn't even do anything...it was someone else, but no one will believe you because of your reputation as someone who could easily have done it. "Well, too bad. Yeah you didn't do it this time. But you've done it plenty of times when you didn't get caught. This is just one small step to evening that up." Whop. Kablam. KaBing. Every day in every class, if something was done, it was Z who did the doing. Man, that will create a bit of bitter resentment with a burning urge for vengeance. "Can't touch them guys in power, so I'll just work it out on my...Mother." I don't mean consciously. Z is a good lad. I mean well, that's what happens in families. People get dumped on in the world, and they come home and take it out on the only people who have to keep relating to them no matter what. Especially a kid who is into doing that.

No matter how bad the boy, the mom still loves and wants him to be around even though there are times when she would like to extinguish his flame. I mean put it out. But no, not after all these years of caring for him. Protecting him. Protecting him? "Yeah," mom says, "It would have been much worse if I hadn't always raced in to pull him off or out, or put the brakes on R, or...you understand don't you? He's all I got. I know what I allow him to do is wrong. I'm working on it, I'm working on it. I'll speak to him. He won't hang on me any more, you'll see." She wasn't lying. He did stop after she spoke

with me about it.

He asked me about it in one of our weekly sessions while eating burgers, fries, and cokes...unlimited drinks.

“Gee Z, four glasses, maybe enough.”

“You’re a good man; just old...we young guys hold it.” That was true for all of my boys...I’d drink 1-½ cokes and be pissing the rest of the afternoon.

“Can’t believe you don’t have to go.”

“Nope.”

Z looked at me, eyes cold ice, eyebrows raised, and in a flat voice, “You been talking to my mom about me hanging on her.”

“Yeah Z, you are her son, no matter what your dad asked of you, it wasn’t for you to replace him as her husband. Son’s can’t be their mother’s husband.” He struggled with that.

“But he told me to take his place. She gets lonely. I’m just trying to comfort her, so that she can feel someone is by her side.”

“Hmmm. Yeah, Well, not exactly like that. She spoke to you huh?”

“OK, not like that. I didn’t know.”

“I know Z. I know.”

Here’s one million ways to make your son feel like worthless, hopeless, and what’s more, insane. Now don’t you think that instead of spelling the word “insane” they should have spelled it “outsane?” I’m insane and I’m proud. Hey that would be a great bumper sticker, t-shirt logo. Hell, did you know that insanity can be a job? Well it can. Just think. If you are crazy and your parents are still letting you live at home then the state will pay you good money to keep him there through Supplemental Security Income, (SSI). Between \$800 and \$900. Z’s has been a bread winner from early on. He qualified for SSI and the money came directly to his parents who used it to supplement the family income. When I met the family the main source of income was Z’s SSI, and then because R was a Vet. when he died money came to Z’s mom. Z knew from early on how important to the family’s welfare was his insanity. He kept resisting my efforts to get him up and about. I couldn’t understand it until I connected the need for him not to progress in order to protect the SSI. Well, now it all makes sense. Resist going to school on a regular basis. Resist vocational training programs. Make and miss appointments for job interviews. Miss appointments with the Dept. of Rehabilitation...make one, miss another...intimidate the therapist who can offer supportive programs for increasing independence...SSI, SSI, SSI.

I still forget every once in a while and try to help Z get it together. Z couldn’t find his way anywhere by bus, I shared that before, so his mom always went with him to places. During these past few years I was concentrated on getting Z hooked up with agencies that specialize in placing emotionally challenged youth in job training programs. They were just fronts for incompetence. They advertized the job training, but when Z actually got there, just a list of job possibilities. I set him up with the Dept. Of Rehabilitation, but the counselor didn’t seem to understand that her population of youth were emotionally stretched to the limit. It took only one appointment with her for Z to place her in the teacher category and the projection of all of his stuff was laid on her and of course that didn’t work out. I had coached his mom also on what to say to the lady, but she somehow couldn’t remember what I told her. Hearing that she couldn’t remember

what I told her. Man the frustration until I grew up and accepted “REALITY.” The boy was raised as parent beggars do in India...to be a beggar...trained, beaten, and molded into the best little beggar you can be. Except in Z’s case it was to be crazy. A Crazy Boy. Bring me the money honey.

Yes it angered me. But I’m too professional to express it. But damned right, I’m/was angry. I had to liberate Z from this syndrome. Take from him the only thing he knew how to do well. Yeah, that’s a good idea. Make him into my own image. I wonder where I’ve heard that before...somewhere in the Western Bible, in the first part of the book...something about making Man in His own image...I wonder why everyone with power is trying to make everyone else in their own image. “Love it or leave it.” “Do as I say or the highway.” How about, “Don’t do as I do, do as I say.” Hey, this also goes for everyone who doesn’t have power and wants it. I wonder what it says for those who are defeated, have given up, who have lost the will to struggle up. Is this failure or just good common sense?

I mean, the person who is beaten so bad that any effort to raise back up brings the goon’s foot down on one’s neck. Get it? “Keep your head down. Keep your head down I won’t need to step on you.” Hey life is fun when it’s all about trying to get up when someone is standing over you to knock you back down. They got to sleep don’t they? That’s what relief stompers are for. “You’re off. I’m on. Before you go, you want to tell me which ones keep needing stomping?”

Z can’t be kept down. But for him down is up, so he doesn’t really have to contend with getting stomped on. He stomps thinking that that keeps him up when after all the stomping he’s received, he stomps himself now by continuing to stomp on others. It’s enervating to have an endless vista of heads that keep popping up that need popping. With Z forward is backward, backward is sideways, and sideways is upside down.

I’ve seen Z at a corner bewildered by the cross walks and the ever changing lights. I’ve seen him standing on the corner for twenty minutes while lights change for him to cross but because of what’s taking place in his mind, it isn’t computing correctly. He tells me, “Cars keep on coming, if not from this way then another.” He’s trying to get to the diagonal corner. “Z, wait until there are some people crossing then when they start to walk across the street just walk along with them. You’ll get there. I got to hand it to Z; he’s not a quitter, just a frustrater. When he get’s back he’s elated with his accomplishment. “Worked just like you said it would. Man, you’re the only one who is still there for me. Thanks.” Great feeling. Not of getting Z up and going. Great that I care enough about him to keeping him in my heart. That’s what it’s all about anyway. Keeping someone in my heart. Got to remember this. Forget progress; just heart sitting...heart to heart, side by side...neither going here or there...but being, heart beat to beat. Just being in the rhythm...slap, rap, de think, de do.

What’s going on with our culture is what is going on with Z. He’s not doing anything but letting the world know that there is something wrong. OK, now with the financial collapse people will admit there’s something wrong, especially for those who are now losing their jobs and their homes. But these same people before the collapse were into to it as much as they could be into it. No, they weren’t Wall Street Guys, but they were wishing they were. They all wanted something for nothing. “Hell no I don’t care what I pay for the house. It’s going to go up 20% by next year, and so forth and so on. I’ll be rich. They took out bad loans, not because they were being tricked. They took out

toxic mortgages because they didn't have to pay anything for them. They weren't innocent. Of course when the bubble popped, then they were poor, ignorant, and defrauded..."We were taken advantage of, cheated, contracts too complicated to read...Cheated. No, not cheated, just Greeedy and Wanting some of it. Of course human nature is just that. Who could resist getting some when everyone else was getting theirs? It's totally understandable...but it doesn't change the nature of humans and their relationship with greed.

Yeah, mortgages with zero down, don't have to even have a job...the big boys just want their fees...got them too. All the mortgage brokers and the Realtors collected billions. They knew what they were doing. It wasn't the Wall Street Gang alone. Escrow offices too. Hundreds of thousands, millions made off like the bandits they were, and no repercussion for their participation. Blaming Wall Street. Heck, Wall Street couldn't have done it unless everyone below them wanted in on their game...complicit all the way, from top to bottom and back to the top. That's how gangs run. Just the same.

What does this have to do with Z? Well, Z couldn't participate, but he did know what he and his mom were being left out of with all their money going for renting a single bedroom overlooking the freeway, for food, utilities...no cable TV, no internet, no iPod, no car...they were so down that they couldn't even get some...we'd talk about why I didn't get some for myself. I asked him whether I would be spending time with him on my own if I was one of the people who wanted to get some...when the some was what was keeping Z and his mom down? What was keeping Z and his mom trapped. Messed up priorities. Why does Z, who had serious emotional trauma and brain dysfunction have to pay the bill for all those who would take as much as they could grab...leaving insufficient resources for those below them. Do you realize that because of the greed of those fine citizens that the state is going to cut off Z's and his mom's medical insurance, along with hundred of thousands of other poor folk and their children who are indigent and without resources of their own? What is the message to Z? He knows that it's poison. Everyone who can, got into it to get their own, only to be poisoned by it after they got it. Toxic Assets. But the people on top...special protection. The one's in the middle...losing their life earnings, jobs, medical coverage, college funds, homes...The ones on the bottom...their safety net. Well, when the unemployment and its extension run out there are going to be a lot more people sharing the space with Z and his mom. It hasn't happened yet...it will.

Yeah Z, get a job. Be independent. Be a Man...so one day you can support your family. Compete with people with degrees who are now unemployed. What a mess and Z doesn't want in, but he does want. He wants what he sees from those he admires...the rappers. Bling...gold chains, cars, really fast cars and fast women, lots of women. Z seeks the life of a rapper, and he writes and writes of his life, his suffering, his anger, the vengeance he seeks, the despair, the hopelessness, the crassness of life, the inability to maintain relationships, the treatment of others as he has been treated...he raps and he writes and he writes great, and is rapping better.

"Z, write a song that is uplifting, inspirational, a doorway to something good..."

"Why, so that I can frustrate myself with dream illusions?" He doesn't say this to me...he's not conscious of it, but he feels it...it eats at him and tears him up.

"Z, there is already so much out there about the hood this and the hood that...you can't compete with that...it's theirs."

“Why, you don’t have faith in me?”

“Ridiculous. I’ve got your back and it’s just that as long as you keep your head in the shit, even if it is your own shit, it’s only going to tie you to that shit. You got to have a dream... a goal that doesn’t recycle you endlessly with no exit from your street. You can use your gift to imagine how people need to interact so that together you can make your situation a better world. Yes, write of your condition, your resentment, your rage... good, but also start adding a bit of sugar... start writing of ways of improving your situation and what is needed to do that. That’s what’s needed. The hood is the hood, not by choice, but by being a dumping ground for those who society doesn’t want, doesn’t need. Bring the words out that speak of that, not just the bullets, whores, and speed of life.”

“Man, there is no out for me. Look at me. I’m a mess. I’m so messed up I can’t even see my feet, let alone know where I am. I’m here and you’ve seen I don’t even know where here is let alone where there might be.” He doesn’t say this, he just means it. Can’t name the streets near his home because for him they don’t exist, or if they do exist, they just keep coming and going, but they’re only stable when his mom is with him on the bus. No clue where to get off without her. Without her, those streets have no meaning except where the fast food is. What’s going on with his brain that this is so true?

For all the years he was in “therapy” and in special education classes there never had been a professional who took the position of advocating for the benefit of his being offered an evaluation to assess his ability to process. It was so obvious that his brain was not processing his visual world correctly. What is it like when what you see isn’t there for you, and yet for everyone else, yep...it’s there. I wasn’t even sure that he was hearing what was being said to him, and if it was, his brain didn’t have the facility of integrating it into his way of life.

Can you imagine the visual and auditory world of sight and sound being too overwhelming for the brain to put order into the incoming stimuli? How long does it take for a guy like Z to begin to function within a new setting? Once he figures it out, it could already be too late. What I mean by that, say someone is telling you something, and you start to think about it while that person keeps speaking. Finally when you tune in you have no idea what has been said during the time your concentration was on the past statement. In this case your brain has to fill the gap between the last thing you heard and the current comments. In Z’s case he can’t do that and has no idea what is currently going on. In most people’s case they can kind of figure out the missing parts to connect up with the current statements. However often this is being done inaccurately. That’s why people get into arguments about what was said.

“I said that, weren’t you listening?”

“That’s not what you said. This is what you said.”

The reality of illusion. The listener believes they heard the series of statements because when they fill in the blank it is done subconsciously, and the fill in to them was what was said. They believe that because that is what their brain is telling them. However, no. That wasn’t said. The person who was speaking is correct. The other person wasn’t listening, but what both people don’t understand is this process of dropping out of the conversation when a statement stimulates a thought. It’s amazing that no one is conscious of this no matter how many times they get into arguments about what was really said.

In Z’s case this was going on plus the same dysfunction was going on visually.

That's why Z struggled to figure out where he was once he left his neighborhood. Another point of impact was the fact that whenever he needed to leave his immediate neighborhood his mother attended him. I know that when I am a passenger being taken to a new place I have no clear idea of where I am in relationship to how I got there. But, if I had been driving to the new location and had spent the time to look at a map I would know how I got there and where I was. So, because Z was always slipping into confrontations with anyone who looked at him, he wasn't safe to others when he was alone. So his mother always went with him and did the work of looking at the bus schedule and planning the point of departure and where to get off the bus. So, even though Z was 15 when I met him he had never been independent and all of those years when other people are learning how to get around, Z was getting around, but not on his own and there was no improvement or expansion of his knowledge of his general community. I believe a great deal of his aggression also originated from his feelings of incompetence, and especially when he had to travel into a new environment. The level of his anxiety had to be so high that anything could easily trigger a release of his frustration.

So when Z has to go to a new location, or one he's been to before where everyone expects him to know how to get there, but he doesn't, he begins to freak out. What I meant by "How long does it take for a guy like Z to begin to function within a new setting? Once he figures it out, it could already be too late." For an example, Z starts a new class with a new teacher. This in itself is already too overwhelming. The new class has a different look. Each teacher decorates their classroom differently. His teacher looks different than the previous teacher and speaks in a different manner. The teacher's organizational skills are also different. Many of the students may be new. The new teacher has no direct knowledge of Z, except what has been said by the previous teacher(s) so the teacher would be smart to be anxious. All of this is going on for Z and it will take weeks for him to conceptualize some degree of order into this classroom, which for him is a setting of boiling chaos.

He's not ready to receive instruction...his emotional state is too agitated while his mind is struggling to understand all of the differences. It's already too late. During the time he is trying to settle in the teacher has already launched into the curriculum. He's isn't receiving anything. Immediately he begins to fall further behind. He feels inadequate as other students obviously are getting it and getting the praise of the teacher. Z has only one outlet for this feeling of increasing despair...aggression. Drive them back, drive them back and away...get suspended, thankfully.

Difficult to get up in time for the bus. It's so easy to understand. For Z staying in bed is safety, "I know where I am and how to function here." To go to school is to feel like crap. Hell no, turn over, sleep on, growl at mom when she tries to get me up. When I'm small she could, but at fifteen...I guess not. And why is falling asleep so difficult? Just imagine what happens after you fall asleep. You have to get up and go back to that cell of a classroom to be tortured all day by the feeling of inadequacy. And who is the person torturing Z. The teacher. Who's making him go to school? His mom. Who does he direct his aggression at? His mom who is a passive person. Not the teacher who has the power. He takes it home and dumps it on his mom and blames her for his position in life. He tried that once or twice with R when R was still up and about. That didn't work out too well. Whap. Nothing like the power of Whap for a man with a son...it makes contact with the part of the brain that resides in the ass...hurt that and you get the kid's attention

and the point made; not having to have it administered again. With mom...nah...no point, no point so no point in not turning over for another forty winks and to miss the bus.

I wish this was all that was coming down on Z. Z had peers. He still has peers. None of them are doing too well. Hey, if Z was friends with every kid in America who was caught up in the net with him, he would be the most popular youth in the world. Z isn't alone in this situation. I'm saying that Z isn't the only kid, well he's 21 now, so I can't say youth, but I'm writing about the time from when he was 15. That's youth.

Something happened to Z's development while his mom was carrying him. Something didn't connect properly. Did you know this, and while this wasn't Z's exact situation, it's similar. Should the mother be doing drugs and or alcohol during the pregnancy, the fetus's could be damaged and when born often has similar dysfunctions as I've been describing in Z. The child can't develop properly and especially in the area of processing and the ability to develop appropriate social skills is impacted. It isn't unusual for kids born addicted or exposed to drugs and alcohol to have a disconnect in the executive control system of the brain. That's what tells you what's right and wrong. It assists in the moderation of emotions. It helps manage frustration. I believe that most of the kids and adults in jail come from this population.

I work with these kids and where most people have that little voice inside giving the rules and boundaries, these kids don't have it. It has to come from outside. It has to come from outside from someone they trust or can't ignore. That person provides the auditory and visual cues that allows the connection. It isn't that they didn't download the ethics of social interaction. It's that the wiring to it, that links to behavior, never formed. The outside voice provides that connection when done correctly. It can be done authoritatively by a person in a backed up authoritarian position such as a strong and "lethal" parent, by a strong and "lethal" teacher, or by the guards in a lock down facility. Because adult's who provide cues don't have either the time or commitment, the authority to impose the cues has to be indisputable. Without the authority the youth will not accept the cues. However having the authority doesn't teach the kid how to process independently.

The cues can also be provided by a soft hearted, kind, and passive loving person, but this requires the primary development of a relationship and that takes individually focused time and commitment. Instead of telling the kid what to do, which will trigger defiance the cue has to be coded in a special manner. The initiating verbal cue sounds like this: "I wonder what can be done to improve our situation." Or, "I'm trying to get a feeling for where I'm having trouble communicating. I sure can use some help." These are not directives, nor are they questions. Rather they are intuitive inquiries. The inquiry worded in this manner provides the cue and acts to accesses the intuitive processing part of the brain, and by bypassing the cognitive area; the area where the brain dysfunction resides, the kid can respond in a positive manner and perform the task.

This is true should the parent, teacher or other person responsible for giving the cues choose to learn how to achieve this set of skills. Well, in the ghetto, this isn't going to happen too easily. The stress levels are too high. In the ghetto kids don't go to special education classes...the only class they get sent to is Juvenile Hall, from which they graduate and leads them to a higher level of education: gangs and prison. Kids do get their education. That's where we stick poor kids with prenatal alcohol and drug syndrome. Well, Z was still at home, but many of his friends weren't. They were staying

with Z in his bedroom while his mom slept on a bed in the living room.

Like I stated earlier, she's a saint. Her sainthood is invisible because she doesn't interact socially. People do visit with her, but she rarely spends time with anyone out of the home. She allows Z to bring these homeless friends into her home. She feeds them. Washes their clothes. She listens to them. She provides nurturing and acceptance. What makes her a saint isn't what she does for them. You'll see.

True when the new kid comes into her home it just starts out with him hanging out with Z. Soon she finds the friend sleeping on the floor in Z's room after hanging out all night. A while later he's there every morning. Z's new roommate. The kid is on perfect behavior. Soft spoken, thoughtful; takes out the trash, helps bring the groceries up stairs. Mom likes having him there; to be with someone who speaks with her with respect. It feels good compared to Z who often harangues her about this and that, like many "husbands" with their wives when they are frustrated or just don't feel right. It's not long before the friend begins to feel very comfortable, and what happens when kids begin to feel very comfortable...they begin to call her Mom. Well this feels really good to her, and so polite too.

Now here's what I've seen happens every time once this "mom stuff" starts. This calling her mom, and "mom" is that special word, begins to trigger a projection of the kid's relationship with his own mom...who kicked him out for behaving just like Z, except Z's mom never kicks Z out. After the honeymoon period the kid is treating her with disrespect and begins to compare his helpfulness to Z's complete disregard for any social responsibility within the home. Should she begin to attempt to reprimand the kid, he begins to speak back to her, just like he would to his own mom. Next, Z begins to hear his friend disrespect his mother...whoops. I've shared what happens when anyone disrespects Z's mom. Kaboom. Goodbye friend with his clothes being thrown down the stairs after his body that is bouncing its way to the bottom. Well, usually Z's mom can get the kid out of the apartment before that, but not always.

One kid actually stole from her...took her wedding ring...this was before I suggested that he might have done it, given his free access to the apartment. He had blamed it on someone else. She and Z couldn't believe this, but when some money was stolen...then...it was a lot more than Kaboom...it was more like stomp and squish...and every time after, when Z saw him more stomping and squishing. Some of these kids are really slow...see Z, Z sees him...duh. The point is she's not a Saint because she allows his homeless and disturbed peers stay in the apartment. It's rather she knows the cycle but feels that to be a loving Christian one cannot set boundaries to the need of these kids and so she opens her arms and hearts to them. That's being a Saint.

I am working with her. I am working to teach her how to set boundaries that in fact help the kids to function in addition to her understanding of unconditional love that has no structure. I hope that I've helped her understand that it isn't helpful in the long run to give people what you believe they need, but in reality only triggers their disability. A more adept definition of unconditional love is to give the person unconditionally what they need so that they can function at their best. Is this debatable?

I wonder what it is like for Z to live with a Saint. Z feels that without him in his mom's life, she wouldn't have the opportunity to demonstrate her Saintness. He's got a point. No criminal, no need for a cop, etc. Cops should not only be grateful to the criminal for providing them with employment, they should be sure each of the criminals

that they caught is treated well in prison. You arrest him, he's prosecuted and sentenced, then he's your responsibility in and when he comes out of prison. That's a relationship. You become his mentor when he comes back into the community. You help him get housing, a job, and a social setting to relax and to meet other's who are on the path to real integration...integration into the element of society where one can live without having to make a living from crime. Every police officer has a case load. Got enough in your caseload, no more arrests for you. More cops, less prison guards, it works out financially. Doesn't cost anymore just a lot more effective means of reducing and deterring recidivism. Recidivism is when someone gets out of jail, then commits more crime...leading back to prison.

OK, we need more people like Z's mom... a saint who is willing to be of service to lost criminal youth by opening their homes and to be willing and able to provide nurturing and redirection. It's the redirection part that we all struggle with; with Z and with his friends. Even should his mother do everything right, or better by attempting to provide the boundaries, structure and rules, she still doesn't have the power to back them up. This is because when the kids are giving her backtalk, they don't see her but their own mom. They are actually hallucinating subconsciously. This is true when Z has a problem with an authority figure. In his mind he sees his father.

All of these kids are hallucinating internally all the time...it may take time for them to attach the hallucination on the other person, but they will. Now, this isn't so unusual in the "normal population." Except in the normal population this hallucination is called something different: Issues. He or she has issues. Not brain damage but issues. Well, therapy can be helpful with issues when there is no brain damage. But therapy alone struggles mightily when a kid has brain damage as well as issues, and especially when the therapist is capable of being in denial as to the brain damage that is so obvious when one is willing to see it.

In Z's mom's situation she is aware of the issues and the uncontrolled projection of the kids that stay with them, she's just not able to provide the boundaries that are so essential to her goal of nurturing them so that they can begin to make progress. Her sainthood is trapped in the net of her own life experiences that she hasn't processed, and I'm coming to believe, the word is "can't." She can't process her issues that entrap her. The trap is providing something too valuable to disassemble without a guarantee of a more positive replacement. There's nothing in her life that allows her to believe that any replacement is guaranteed to be better. She wanted me to be that guarantee...

My life experience leads me to conclude that we are all just a bunch of projections of other people's lives. We don't experience the person we are with; they merely provide a screen upon which to project our life experiences. Even in the depths of love we feel that space, that separation. That's why we are individuals. Individuals that have the capacity to love, but never to fully merge into a greater being like the sperm and the egg do when fertilization takes place. Because it's two becoming one, there is none-the-less the memory of the two and that dualism exists genetically, or so I believe. It is helpful to be aware of this, rather than in denial or worse, below denial...not even faintly aware. I seek the unity of fertilization and simultaneously I also struggle with the conscious awareness of the duality. With people with huge issues, the anxiety of the duality is too great to allow many moments of unity.

Sex begins...ahhhhhhh...Sex over. Sex, blissful unity. Sex over...duality. That

union is painful and yet so addictive. In...out. High...low. Close...distant. Like breathing. In and out, inhale and exhale...draw into sex, and exhale to aloneness. For Z all relationships except that with his mother are just like that. Come, come closer, enjoy, over and over again until it starts to become serious...anxiety, fear,... conflict, disengagement...disparaging viewpoint...dumb blankety blank...don't know what I ever saw in her...Hmmm, yes you do...but it wasn't enough, or it was too much. Gee, Z what about just forming a friendship before the sex?

"Too young, maybe when I'm older. Our lives are too painful to delay the brief moments of release and pleasure. Shit, I want more, just I'm drowning for real, and when my head comes up before being swept back down, I got to take my air anyway I can. Can you understand this?"

"Yes. I just keep forgetting. I've been there and for a loooong time. Yes I understand. You got to have it when you can or you'll die. The only thing that separates life from suicide is the connection of sex. It's a life saver. Life just feels like an abortion, except it's me that society is attempting to abort. That's why it's all messed up."

Z share, "Yeah, I'm against abortion but I won't use a condom. I need to feel as much as I can when I have the opportunity to have any feelings at all that are good."

"It all makes sense suddenly. Thanks. Hanging out with you teaches me a great deal about my own humanity. Hope we can keep remembering this. Want to?"

"Want to what?"

"Right."

My journey is into the Truth, but I continuously question to what degree. I keep progressing, then hit a barrier. Oh, I'm proud of my commitment to the path, but as each of the barriers are met, well I used to fight them. Then I realized that they were there for a reason, and so I sought out to know these barriers so that I could understand how they were set to benefit me. I already knew how they limited me. Too one sided. I matured and began to seek other perspective that would allow me to listen to other viewpoints.

Hey, let's say we are going to get paid a lot of money if we can accomplish this task. There is a bottle between us. It has printing on the side facing me and also on the side facing you. Only when each of us individually can explain to the person with the money what is on both sides can we get our share. Man, I'd be very motivated to listen to what my partner had to say about the view from the other side. It's the money that I could get that opened me to the other person's points of view.

We can never figure out what's happening until we can understand and then integrate all of the points of view into the whole. That's how we discover what the whole really is. Otherwise we are just pontificating our point of view and trying to force everyone to accept it as true. That's what leads to conflict. We can't accept that we are just individual parts of the whole. We seem to have to believe that we are the whole and everything and everyone needs to fit into our world view. That's how we dominate...and of course, that's how others seek to dominate...not cooperate, but dominate...and those who can, do.

What's this have to do with Z? He of course, is part of humanity that is trying to do the same thing. And he is in his own way. Making the world as he views it...thus the trap. But given his processing disabilities it's the best that he can do...to do more is too overwhelming to his nervous system. What's it like to do more, resulting in your nervous system getting overwhelmed? There is such a stigma against brain dysfunction, which is

absurd for isn't that the definition of humanity...just one large conglomerate of brains dysfunctioning. Oh, we call it mental illness...emotional problems...ohhh, that person has emotional problems...beware...run...they are a danger to us; to our ability to control our emotions.

For some reason, the dominators demand from the dominated that they suffer with a smile on their face...or off with their face. Once that happens the dominated start insisting that their family and community members also control their emotions...don't let anyone see; you know where that leads to...off with their face. But when the dominators get upset, they have no hesitation about showing it to those under them...attack the weak, humiliate them, threaten their livelihood, insult their intelligence, insult their manhood, but that only from behind the goons that protect them and enforce their will... Tyrant boss; who hasn't been through that? Tyrant teacher. Tyrant parent. Blah blah blah.

We put each other down because it helps us feel better about our subordinate position in life. The point is that if we didn't do this putting down stuff, we'd likely have to be honest about our situation and either revolt or commit suicide. Divorce is a kind of suicide...killing your part of your marriage...kill the marriage...a bit of homicide when you kill the marriage and the other person wants to continue to work it through...kill their part of life within the marriage...or a suicide pact when both decide to divorce...both willing to kill the marriage. That's probably why the divorce rate is so high...people get a glimpse of reality and to protect their fragile image of potency, freak out and break the mirror that is reflecting one's vulnerability...the spouse. Off with the face.

Society provides this to adults, but what does society provide to a child? Born into a family...stuck in the family. The only way out from it is to act out so badly that the state takes you out and places you institutionally, or to commit suicide...but in the situation of kids, the suicide is real. Now if you don't have it for suicide and the state refuses to sweep you out of your family, then the only thing remaining is withdrawal into video games, into drugs, into violence...to have an outlet that keeps you less impacted by the truth of your situation. Now, in Z's case, not only was his family dangerous to his welfare...his brain was born disabled. Overwhelming. It struggles to compute the relationships between items of input. Z's operating system, OS, is incapable of processing the social input at the speed that society is tossing it at him. That's why he needs to self-isolate, restrict his contact with his neighborhood, to reduce the input so that he can at least function to some degree. Remember until recently Z couldn't travel independently.

In late '02, years before I met Z and his mom I had an AVM, which is a vein that is in the process of blowing out from too much blood pressure caused by an artery somehow connecting to it. The AVM was located in the area of my brainstem. Life threatening like an aneurism. An aneurism is like a balloon that is being blown up until there is so much blood pressure it pops and then so do you. Anyway, I had to have an operation during which I had a stroke. When I woke up in intensive care the right side of my body was "somewhat" disconnected. Everything I knew was somehow still inside, but the connection between what I knew how to do physically and mentally was severed. My challenge was to encourage my brain to grow neuronets to connect what I knew how to do, to my ability to do them. After sticking my toothbrush into my eye a few times I was able to adjust by totally focusing on a previously "no brainer" and get it into my mouth. Surprisingly once it was in my mouth, my hand didn't seem to know what to do. "Ok

hand...gently now, a little bit forward and a little way back. That right... a little more.” Of course before I could manage the tooth brush I had to reconnect sitting up, standing up, taking a step, trying to figure how to sit down before my legs collapsed, and how to lean back down without falling off the bed. Say nothing of the double vision...which one of you is you?”

During this process I acquired first hand the experience of what Z lives with. What I wasn't aware of during the process of reconnecting myself back up was that my processor while still functioning was functioning only within a very restricted zone. It's kind of like say before my injury I had full peripheral vision, but after the stroke and after therapy I was able to regain my vision but the peripheral field was reduced to only between my eyes. Everything beyond that core field of vision was blacked out. When I regained my function I discovered in numerous life threatening ways that I wasn't able to multitask successfully. What existed had to be in front of me. So if I turned on a pot of water to boil and then I went to answer the auditory cue of the phone ringing, as soon as I took my eyes off the pot of water, it ceased to exist. It was only when I picked up the smell of superheated metal that I found the empty pot with the flame still on.

I did learn how to compensate, more later, but I had to restrict my tasks to only one, no multi tasking, then with complete concentration on the task I could perform adequately. Water boiling...I wonder why I wanted the water to boil. I then would need a visual cue...an egg. I want to boil an egg. In it goes...set the time so that I get an auditory cue...and presto I did it. What I didn't initially realize was that anytime I had to learn something new it would quickly overcome my processor and I would start to malfunction. For instance if I had to go drive to a new location, a place I never have been, even if it was around the block, it was overwhelming to my nervous system. An example would be that after stopping for a red light, I proceeded when I saw a green light, however my brain didn't process that it was a left turn only, green arrow. I just saw green and went forward. “Why is that person honking at me? I have the right of way...oh damn. Where did that left turn arrow come from?”

While all of this is amazing to me...I don't believe it is amazing to Z. I was able to regain most of what I had before, and surprisingly, a lot of what wasn't being used is now in use. For Z...the connections are, well after 21 years when we go eat Z still can't connect the need to take the napkin and wipe is mouth. He uses his shirt, his new shirt that he just got. However he will automatically use the napkin when I hand it to him. He knows how to do it. It's just not connected.

Man, you have to be on your game not to screw up a relationship with Z who will get rid of anyone who overwhelms his nervous system. I don't blame him...it's just so defeating. He can't grasp his disability. It's too abstract. Too amorphous. Too can't touch it. I mean he is progressing...very slowly...progress comes slowly for him. It would be great if the people in the world could wake up to their own degree of humanity and not be so judgmental and eager to get rid of anyone who doesn't fit into their scheme of things. But that isn't going to happen any too soon.

When I was in Hopi land I came across a concept that I'm still chewing on. I was told...in English...so I'm not entirely sure I can grasp the concept, that to the Hopi everything that happened in what I think of as the past is still happening. I want to say, “and will continue to happen,” but that's not possible for if in fact everything that has happened continues to happen then there is also no concept for the future. Here and now

is everything that ever happened. Now, I wonder, what kind of mind can experience life like this and I wonder am I at all open to experiencing this? Well, when I listen to my own thoughts and conversations when I am speaking of the past...even though I am viewing it as an event of the past, am I not by “remembering it” reliving it in the present. Should it be an incident that caused me pain, I am affected by it in the present and start to get an attitude...anger, resentment, bitterness...etc. Then I have to catch my self and put that memory back where it belongs, or so I think, and stick it back into the past that I have sealed off. Or, am I not, in the present, a mishmash of what I ever was or experienced. So everything in the past is still a part of me. But I hate to be controlled...so why would I “allow” the past to control my current attitude...no, I won’t.

While I was going through the recovery from the stroke and other damage that occurred as a result of the AVM brain surgery I decided while I’m at it I may as well reconstruct myself to be more pleasing to myself and others. I opened up and closed off various avenues so as to arrive at who I imaged me to be. It really wasn’t just about regaining my previous function...why not make a few improvements on the way. I’ll add a bit of this, a touch of that, a smidgen of some of those...Ahhh, pretty tasty.

I tell Z of all this. Do I pretend that I am planting seeds so that one day his subconscious can fertilize and water them and out of Z will grow the potential that is so disconnected? Maybe. I tell Z of this because I like him and I view him as part of my life, a part of me. Z is part of me and I’m part of him to the degree that we allow this to be. We’re in each other’s life as much as life is in us. Is it part of the Hopi Way? Z says I’m the only professional who is still with him and there for him and his mom. I remember saying that before. He tells me he’s much different than the kid I first met. He tells me he’s learned a lot. For instance. I’m a Jew and I’m not cheap. Now, anyone bad mouths Jews, Z is in their face. Well, I can’t say that’s a poor use of aggression. No it isn’t. He tells me that he always will have my back. Any time I need someone taken care of it will be taken care of. OK, I feel safer. Do I? No.

“Z, it’s good to know I can depend upon you, but I ask, “Is it OK?”

”What you mean?”

“Z, you do something to back me...it goes wrong...you go down...who takes care of your mom? She only has you.”

“She’ll take care of herself. You need help, I’m there.

“Z, you remember when you and your “friend” were walking the block and this kid came up to him and stabbed him in the chest. When he fell with the blade in him and hit the ground his piece fell out of his belt. You grabbed the rod and chased the guy down the street and then you shot him in the leg. You remember I asked you what about your friend with the knife in his chest? How you left him there bleeding while you chased the attacker?”

“Yeah, well he stabbed my friend. Stab my friend I get you. It’s the block.

“You remember how we talked about your first duty was to get help for you friend, who was still alive, but bleeding...to death. How you needed to have called 911.”

“Yeah, but another friend came with a car and we dropped him off outside the emergency room. He lived. What’s your point? He lived and I got the guy you knifed him.”

“Do you remember the reason you found out as to why the guy knifed your buddy?”

“Yeah, my friend had sold the son of a bitch flour. It pissed him off when he tried to smoke it.”

“Z, you shot a guy who your buddy sold flour too instead of cocaine. He deserved to be knifed. My man, you are the super hero. You get into all sorts of situations helping and saving others and it never has anything to do with you. So far you’ve been blessed. You never lose a fight. You save the downtrodden in the face of a dire threat, you never get badly hurt, and you never get caught when you do things. Z...what can I say?”

“You know, you’re right. That’s what you’re good at. Talking sense. You’re right. I get into all of these situations...I don’t even like violence. In fact I hate it. It all comes from my dad. Damn, he messed my life up bad.”

“Dad’s do that Z. Even my kids’ most dominant feelings about my parenting are controlled by the times they felt that I messed up bad. They feel that way about my ex-wives also.

“Come on, you must have been a great parent.”

“I would seem that way from my current mind set, however I wasn’t always “so wise.” When I was younger, just having children, I was completely intuitive and reactive within my emotional personality. I only began really studying parenting long after I had children. When I was young I felt that I was doing great, spending a lot of time with my children, involved with all their activities, sharing my love and skills with them, playing with them, teaching them sports, coaching their soccer and basketball teams. All there. However like most people, I didn’t really experience my inadequacies clearly. I felt that they were caused by pressures of work, by judgments by my parents and by my in-laws. I saw myself undermined by not having the same philosophy of parenting as my wives. This all resulted in my feeling undermined by the adult relatives and treated without respect. Mainly they felt that the time I spent with my children would have been better spent making more money. Their philosophy of the father is money maker...the rest is left up to the mother. My wives seemed to feel the same way. It was like I was getting into their role by being so involved. Man, it’s a lot doing something you never did before.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I never was a parent before. I did like everyone else learning a new skill. The problem is that in parenting it’s not a technical skill and it’s not an object that you are learning and making mistakes on. It’s a child. Nothing you do doesn’t affect the development of your child. Yeah, even when learning, the mistakes mount up. It’s not until they are fully grown that the learning curve plateaus. That means for every year of their life there is another whole year of not knowing what you are doing. Even with the second, third and fourth child, because each has a different personality, what was learned before may not apply to the following children. Probably the whole thing starts over when a grandfather.”

“Wow, I don’t think I’m ever going to be a father. Hell, I’m still learning just how to be a kid.”

“I’m not sure this isn’t just one giant disconnect. Kids see things as kids experience them. It’s not until they are parents that they can even begin to get any insight into the life of a parent. I mean I went through my life with my uncomfortable childhood memories dominating the manner in which I perceived and interacted with my parents. There was a great deal of physical and emotional pain associated with those memories.

Memories are powerful influencing factors in me.”

“Me too.”

“About twenty years ago I wrote my autobiography. My kids were still young. It was in writing about my painful childhood that I connected to the difficulty my parents must have had given all the pressures of life. I remember while writing a part about the beatings my mom used to give me. Every Thursday she did housework including vacuuming. I knew that when I returned from school...I was in kindergarten, I would get a beating. Well, when my kids were young one by one they got the flu...vomiting and pooping in the night...get up change them, change the bed, start the laundry. One kid after another...each had it for about a week before the next one got it. Finally my wife got it...anyway it was winter and I came home one day after it rained hard, and what do I see, but my middle child returning from mud sliding with the next door neighbor...I lost it. Five weeks of no sleep, doing all the housework, working, and I just grabbed her, yelling at her about just recovering from the flu, and tearing off her muddy clothes before hustling her into the bedroom. I was in a moderate rage...my wife attempted to interfere, put herself between me and our daughter...without any control I knocked my wife to the floor...then upon seeing this, I snapped back into what sanity I still had. Tooooooo Late. She wasn't hurt physically, but that moment of rage terminated our relationship. Anyway with the concurrent memory of my mother beating me and the memory of my rage I suddenly got it. My mother was probably overwhelmed with parenting. My father never helped. Father's didn't at that time. He would cut the grass on Saturday morning, trim the hedge...and that was that. Five children and my mother did all the caring for us. I got it. The beatings were not excusable but now for the first time understandable. People lose it. No one to help...things get out of control...we now call that child abuse...then it was just part of living. All of my attachment to my beatings and how they messed me up evaporated with that insight. I was no longer angry at my mother for the beatings and for my father's detachment. It just was the way it was. Yes it affected me, but I no longer needed to spend time enervating myself with those memories. Just do the work to heal, to learn the skills, and to put them into practice. The rest would be as they are.”

“Man, that's deep. I'm in over my head aren't I?”

“Yes Z. That's the truth. Still you're not alone now. You have work to do, and it's going to take a long time. We'll just have to see how it turns out, won't we?”

“You mean you're going to stick around until I get it right?”

“Z, I like you. I like the way you can be honest and tell yourself the truth. That takes courage. You're right that you have been changing in good ways...it just takes a lot to just get by, never mind getting ahead. Sometimes that's what life is about. It isn't about getting ahead. It's just about making the best out of life where you are. I admire you and your mom. You two have done a great job of doing exactly that. You take in the needy and care for them. It's not about them getting ahead either...it's do it because it needs to be done. You two are an inspiration to me.”

Yes, that's what it's all about. You do it because it needs to be done. It's good advice. Good to follow it. Sometimes hard to remember. There have been times when I forget it and begin to focus on Z making progress. Each time he goes along with the “farce” because he's compassionate with me. He knows we have to dance through my need to have a positive outcome to my “dedication.” Off to school. Get a job. Do more around the house. Here's the benefit...pride, independence, a sense of accomplishment.

But then...the cycle...got to keep crazy so that SSI money keeps a coming. Oh yeah! Oh yeah! The anchor...this boat ain't going anywhere. Riggings up, toss the rope...woops, the anchor...no lifting that. The boat straining to make headway, tides on the way out...sails are full...the anchor.

It's painful for Z to have to go through this with me, but he cares a great deal about me, and so he goes along as far as he can, but then the boat flips over and it's the anchor, but looks like it's not. I'm cruel to throw his face into it, and I do it every once in a while because there is something missing in my brain...that blocks the knowledge, can't accept it...got to keep on trying...nothing ventured nothing gained...tra la la la la...step on Z, NOOOOOOOOOOO, but yes. He is so concerned that I will one day abandon him, but it's really a partnership of him also not abandoning me when I screw up with this, "Let's be up and be doing" stuff. A good helper is no better than the person being helped.

I was a lifeguard at the L.A. Swim Stadium, next to the Coliseum. To get into the big pool everyone had to take a swimming test. Over and back width wise. There were some guys who couldn't swim that far, but wanted to be in the big pool because of the diving boards and platforms. One platform was 10 meters high. Anyway one day this very built guy jumps the fence and sauntered up to the ladder and began climbing up to the ten meter platform. He didn't respond to my whistle and just kept on climbing. Then when he stepped off the ladder he proceeded to the edge of the platform and performed an amazing swan dive. He arched with his arms like wings and he entered the water with nary a splash...straight to the bottom...where he remained. I thought he was fooling around, with a dive like that...and I waited for him to come up, laughing, especially if I had already blown my whistle and dived into the water to save him. Crap, I blew my whistle and dove into the water making my way to the depths of the diving end of the pool, something like eighteen feet deep. Reached out, got him into a hold and pulled him to the surface. He didn't fight me on the way up, but with all of his buddies watching, he started to scream at me, swearing, and so on. So I let him go...back down he went bubbles coming up. Dove back down, got him again...and finally got him to the side where his buddies grabbed him hauling him out of the water. Now that's what I mean, "A good helper is no better than the person being helped." It was his life. It was anything short of that...just let him be in his juices, stewing. Was I rewarded for saving him? Nope. Got reprimanded for almost starting a riot. Sent to work at a kiddy pool for the rest of the summer. That was humiliating, except for the kids that came weren't humiliating. They were great, and alone in life, and hard core poor. The size of the pool didn't matter. It was intimate. Got to know the kids, their stories, and felt great teaching them how to swim and feel good about themselves.

Z was and continues to be a great person to spend time with. Yes I like him. He shows respect. I feel meaningful when we're together. He's teaching me about acceptance. I used to believe it was patience that he was teaching me, and that's part of it, but the deeper teaching is in acceptance. There is no better feeling than to be accepted completely. It's when I realized that it was hopeless...my goal of getting Z up and going in the traditional manner...school and a job that I began to mature more fully. In truth I defeated my self while I was attempting to help him get a part of the pie in the manner that I was most comfortable. It wasn't until that I ground myself down using Z as a grinder that I came to an epiphany. What is an epiphany? A moment of deep insight that

alters one's life. I grew into being empathetic. One day it occurred to me that the whole world didn't see life exactly as I did, and because by my usually only listening to myself I became completely lost. Lost in a desert of my own making, starting to die of thirst. Somehow it never came into my mind to question the person who found me and who had water and a means of getting out of the desert.

Yes, master, I want to live. I will acquire the skills of life in the desert. I learned to be patient. When just starting to garden back in New York, after picking the vegetable in the garden before they were ready, and then sitting at a friend's table with their fruit and the vegetables ripe...I guess I could get myself to wait a bit longer before destroying everything I worked so hard to grow. I acquired the ability to keep calm under duress. Probably my nervous system just finally burned out...hard to get excited when the wires are fried. I learned how to persevere. Actually I was too dumb to ever quit. What I learned at the moment of the epiphany was that when there is no longer any hope...life comes to us through compassion.

I never experienced a moment of compassion before that. I cared, I sympathized, I empathized...but. Compassion for me was the outcome of finally after putting all of my self into "saving" Z, and realizing that I couldn't accomplish this very important goal, that neither Z nor I were failures. It had nothing to do with him or me making our way through the obstacles, and emerging from the darkness into the light. It wasn't about surviving a catastrophe against all odds. It was about not making it out of the darkness, not overcoming the obstacles, not having actually survived the catastrophe. We didn't. We were beat up, broken, and defeated. There was no escape. The door was closing, the water was lapping over our heads, our bodies were being consumed by the fire...and it was all right because we weren't going to quit on each other. It was in complete defeat that I realized that life still had meaning. Compassion is acceptance, no judgment, no recriminations, no disappointment, no sense of weakness, no, it is when I finally accepted my own humanity. Z was just the honest reflection of my condition that I was still attempting to overcome. My trip was an illusion, "I could improve, I could change, I could get out of this trap if I only did improve, change." The struggle was then projected on everyone around me and anyone I might get to know.

I'm a professional problem solver because I was still attempting to not accept the depths in which humanity lives. Humans can be heroic. Humans can be genius of invention. Humans can be giants of the arts. But in relationships in general, in the way people treat each other to their specific advantage, in the manner in which people plunder the resources of the earth in order to make even more...humans are humans, and it's not about choice, it's about the ways things are. Some people dominate...to the disadvantage of the weak. Some people try to get under the wing of the powerful so that they can also have and be safe. But for too many there are no nurturing wings of salvation. There is just suffering, loss, and lack. Can I maintain a relationship with someone like myself who can't change all of this humanity one iota and still find meaning in life? Compassion for myself...compassion for Z and his mom and their neighbors, and for the people who can't care. Acceptance without bitterness.

Compassion must be something like, "Let's make the best of a bad situation. Let's find the good in it and make a life." That decision leads to a rebirth...not with the aim of liberation, but with the sense that life is still sacred and what I have I share. Is this when my opinion really has no meaning if it leads to conflict with others? I began to realize the

interconnectiveness of all life from early childhood, but then it only made me different and the subject of people's attempt to get me to fit in. Their concerns were lofty, their methods draconian. The pain that I suffered from feeling excluded and judged was really the consequence of my being different and not being able to accept the values and mores of those with whom I lived; in whose family I was born. I guess what I am saying is that their behavior was instigated by my existence.

The concern was for my safety. If I didn't fit in then I would be in life a target for the vicious. To me it seemed that my treatment was a training ground for that very experience, except it never really happened. So the pain of that training wasn't really necessary; the emotional collapse, the subjugation of spirit, the loss of trust and safety, the physical trial of being pounded, the feelings of betrayal, the feelings of inadequacy, the deep feelings of anxiety... a great training ground if I had ended up in Auschwitz. There, with this training I might have survived. Assimilation, being invisible, never allowing myself to be singled out, never experiencing the wonder of excelling... self defeating subconscious directives to keep my head down... look and behave normal, but always in denial of who I am... survival.

I was born just after Germany surrendered and before Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Talk of being the middle child. Dead and Center. Compassion. Forgiveness. Is there a relationship between the degree of one's compassion and the degree to which one can forgive? My attitude is vengeance first, and then forgiveness if there is anything left to forgive. That's not to mean if someone apologized and made restitution and was unable to continue to perpetuate the abuse that I wouldn't forgive them. I could forgive them, but that doesn't mean I have to allow them near me or to those whom I am responsible.

Forgive while someone continues to be abusive. No. First stop the abuse by what ever means necessary. Survive! The prime directive of life. Forgive while my life is still a shambles from their abuse, while I am struggling to find a firm foundation upon which to heal? To heal, meaning that I can find the means. To heal meaning that I can emerge from my shell into which I withdrew to save what small amount of spirit that I could preserve. Is it safe to come out and who would be the one to answer and to stand guard? Compassion when it is hopeless; compassion for my soul to have born the degradation and the humiliation of people who were trying in their own twisted way to save me from being different. That's the one the lion takes down. The different, the one that stands out. To me by standing out from the crowd was the only sensible way of not ending up in Auschwitz. Hell no I don't fit and I certainly don't fit into the experience. I have no intention of fitting in to the mass of humanity who is lost and stumbling into the gates of hell by following the piped piper of normalcy.

Compassion in being able to escape, but with all of my loved ones entrapped, does my escape have any conditions of survival that allows me to then return and to open their cells and lead them to freedom? Would they come? Yes, to escape. Then, compassion to return and relock myself, to choose to be entrapped so that I can continue to be with my loved ones and bring them what solace I can.

"You fool. You idiot. You schlemiel, meshugina... you were free you crazy one."

"Yes, but without you and you and you... what meaning is there to be left alive. Life is sacred, and so is free will. I will remain with you, but will lead any of you who want to escape. Once you're free I will return and again and again until the end. That is my choice. I will not turn my face from love, nor will I be a victim as long as I have

choice, and now that I know how to escape and have done it, I really have choice. That's me."

Compassion, to be liberated and to choose to remain. But! Of course But. There is always a but, a what if, what else, blah, blah and more blah. Still can't fit in. They still can't accept that. I just make them miserable by being so close to them. They should admire me. They do, but that also makes them feel bad about themselves, and without me they don't have to feel that way. One comes forward.

"I want to escape."

"Fine, let's do it."

Is that all there is to it. NO. Escaping is a set of skills. I worked hard to discover these skills and not to get extinguished while learning. It takes skills and skills I must teach.

"Let's get started."

"Got to be in shape. Exercise even when standing still. Got to be an actor; got to play any part. Got to have a place to go that is go-able. Got to be willing to die. All or nothing. Got to be still, invisible...got to be quiet, got to fit in...got to be ruthless...got to know how to kill...to steal...to cheat, to lie, to convince, to seduce...to live off the land. Let's get to work."

"Sounds too hard. Forget it. Another time."

"NO. Not forget it, too hard, another time. All of these skills are so that you build up confidence that there is a chance to succeed. Problems can be solved when you believe in yourself and especially in the skills. Escaping is not a lark, a stroll in the park...it is dark. You've got to be able to see in the dark and you can when you start to get used to it. First we'll get to learn how to get out of the barracks. Then we'll learn how to get from one barrack to another without being seen. Then we'll learn how to use the dark to get to the fence and find its weak spot. Then we'll get to learn the rhythm of the guards making rounds. Then we'll learn how to make friends with the dogs. Then we'll learn how to make ourselves very useful, trusted, trusted with errands...we'll gain status and greater freedom of movement to learn more and more of this camp. Soon we'll have the keys to the gates and be able to walk out in full view, being invisible, undistinguished from the background...to build confidence that there is actually a chance that our effort will be successful. That's what is needed, a core of confidence that the impossible isn't, just to the ignorant. What do you say? In or Out?"

"oUt"

"OK, out. Too bad, it would have been fun. I think I'll go for a steak and some wine, maybe dance a bit, who knows, I may get lucky. See you in the morning." Silent as a ghost on the breeze of the night I journey across the boundary of the lost...and climb the ladder into the light...where sounds of laughter, the clink of plates and cups, and the turntable turning the wild tunes of Tommy Dorsey..."

"Hey, get up, didn't you hear the horn. Get up, hurry or we're all in for it."

Compassion is when it is hopeless...it fosters acceptance and if I can't get anyone else to share my life...that's why we were given the ability to dream, cross the boundaries...experience what isn't for us, and to feel a bit revived when waking up from the cold and hunger that pervades the chill of winter, here in the shelves of humanity. Now I know why Z hates to be woken up. Where he is is better. Now I know why he resists going to sleep. It's like saving the best for last. The longer the delay the greater the

gratification. Now it all makes sense. Can't go to sleep. Can't wake up. Something must be happening in between that is pretty cool.

I'm a visitor. I come and leave. I am not able to stay. I want to. I'm not allowed to. A change isn't possible without total dedication. It doesn't have to be the dedication of a fanatic, but rather of the committed. There is a path that must be traveled. It can't be achieved alone.

A cop who lives in the neighborhood is not the same as a cop who leaves the neighborhood to go home. The cop in the neighborhood is willing to experience the same as those who already live there. For better or worse. The same for a teacher. There are lots of teachers who come and go. They spend so much time coming and going that they lose valuable time to just be here. All of their relationships are transitory...students and their parents come and go. Same with social workers...come and go. Don't live in the community. Don't know the lives that are being lived...only hear about them...

I'm a visitor because I am not allowed to stay. "Thanks for coming...now isn't there somewhere you have to go? Leaving so early? Well, see you soon." The disconnect. Ever watch a movie where the action jumps without any transitioning? Or the movie ends moving from a completely unsolvable problem, to the conclusion in about a second or two because the time is up. The TV program House is like that. Dying, nothing works, and suddenly House sees someone eating a sandwich and wham...with thirty seconds left, he concludes it's a parasite...the last ten seconds, Super House in action...a ten foot parasite is being extracted from some unfortunate's intestines. The disconnect. We're trained to accept it. The whole financial system bellies up and Wham...the Fed. comes up with trillions of dollars to save the fat bellies, and when it comes to health care...disconnect...no money. Right. It will cost too much to insure the 60,000,000 uninsured...no problem for the insured..."We got it. You ain't going to get any of it." Disconnect...no revolution...We're trained to accept the disconnects and to accept the suffering...It's OK. Z is tired of the disconnect. May as well live a life of Truth. My life sucks.

In all of this nightmare...compassion...Jesus...except He split and people are still waiting for His return. He might return. He didn't yesterday. Who runs this place anyway? Z believes the devil is the master used to pray...it just got worse. Whose running this place...compassion, hopeless...it's about how can we make the best of hell...how to make it livable. Z is a rapper. He composes beats and lyrics. He's a fighter, a lover, and a Rapper. Yes, R A P P E R. Yet, there is a conspiracy set upon him to keep him down. I wonder what he did in his last life to have to live in this way? Oh well, there is something stalking him and everything he tries to do is taken away. Like he developed over a hundred beats and a virus attacked his computer and wiped out all of his work. He also lost all the songs he developed and stored on the hard drive. All lost. That kind of takes you out when that happens. Z is white looking. So is Eminem. But there isn't two white boys making it as rappers. Is this a problem?

"Z, if you can't perform, you can sell your songs."

"No, I'm not going to allow someone to make millions of my work."

"Z, when you sell a song and it's recognized the next one you sell costs them more. The more you sell the more you get. You don't get the limelight...just the money. No overhead...no traveling...just, "Give me the money, honey."

"Is that right?"

“When you get known, the performers will all be coming to you to get some of it. Your stuff will go to the highest bidder...mucho dinero. Just get it out...make a CD of your stuff and if people dig it, the rappers will hear of you, and they will want some. Don't worry about making money in the beginning. The most important element in success is to get your stuff out there in the freest manner possible. I'll back you. Just get ten or twelve songs together and go into the studio, and put it down.”

Seems right. No, it's Z. There is a conspiracy. His computer goes down. His monitor shorts out. His mike fades. He gets a new computer. No monitor. He gets another monitor, his mike. Has to get a mike. Has to get on the internet to use Fruity Loops to make his beats. He's got to get into the studio. His demo has to be cut, packaged and paid for. Don't worry Z. I've got your back.”

Z knows me. He gives me what I want. “You're the only one who believes in me.”

“Yes I do. I do believe in you. Here's the tough part of being me and this may relate somewhat to you. There's parts of me that can't be seen yet. I'm kind of like a tree. There are branches that are yet to grow. They will. Just not yet. Because I'm a lot older and you're younger, I'm taller with more branches, deeper roots, larger in all ways, and yet I'm not done growing. There was a time I was smaller than you are now. A sapling, a thin and sparsely branched. It was a time when all I could do was concentrate on not getting eaten by deer and elk. Somehow I made it by that stage. Things that I was to become began to happen as the years went by...parts of me that were previously not ready to be displayed, displayed. I became a home to squirrels and birds when my branches filled out. When I was young I wanted them but I wasn't a good and safe home for them. Too small, easily bent, no place to hide. I'm like a tree in most ways. When I was young I felt from the beginning I had a purpose, but it wasn't clear what it was going to be. There were times when I can say it was just luck that I survived.

I remember when I heard roaring and cutting sounds in the distance. Year by year they got closer. I was still very young, very thin and useless. One day man came, actually a certain man. A hero of his people. A tall and powerful man who carried an ax and a saw. His name was Paul Bunyan. Paul was a cutting killer. He knew only one joy...the annihilation of our family. He clear cut the forest, and when he came to me, tall skinny me, he laughed and went on his way. I was below his attention. That's why I'm still here...I was useless. If I had reached my growth, whap whap whap, off with my trunk. Tiiiiimmmmmmbbbberrrrr. Craaaassshhh. Thhhhuud! Oh my...my whole family of elders cut down...just leaving us small fries. We're tall now, but not tall enough yet for the mill. Imagine if I had always known there was something for me to do and it turned out to be cut into boards, nailed into a house, or furniture, or worse, ax handles...could that be my purpose? Nooooooo. But I'm a tree and with roots...how can I flee, escape, sneak out of this hillside. The birds and the squirrels still need homes. The soil still needs to be held tight. You should have seen what happened to the fish when the rains came after the clear cut...mud, mud and more mud all flowing down into the valley, into the stream...and what gave life now brought death to all that swam and illness to all who had to drink.”

“That's not right. That's not fair. Thaaat's scaaaary. What are you going to do?”

“I can't imagine what I can do except tell my story to you.”

“What can I do?”

“I wonder what you do best?”

“Fight!”

“That’s right.”

“HmMMM. Am I supposed to fight Paul Bunyan?”

“Z, I’m telling a story...a metaphor about being like a tree where you are still a sapling and pretty much unwanted because you don’t fit the mold. Some saplings are taken for arrows...you are lucky you didn’t fit that mold. The key is to stay useless long enough to become who you are. When you try to become who you are too soon, well first of all you can’t, and it just calls attention to you. What you have to offer comes with living life’s hardships...surviving life’s hardships; more like choosing to survive life’s hardships. This experience is invaluable for who you will be one day. The key to spirit survival is to keep your heart open no matter the situation. The fact that you choose to fight to defend the weak is a harbinger of how you will develop. Harbinger means kind of a forecast. This is what is coming, just not yet. You will still fight to protect the weak and one day you will find a way of doing it that provides you with a positive outlet for this gift. One that will be appreciated by the people with whom you identify. It’s just about getting past the anger.” Take a deep breath.

“In the story, you come by after the clear cut and see the stripped hillside...the mud in the creek, the piles of dead fish...you are angry. You want to go and punish Paul Bunyan and the people who pay for Paul to do his thing; the suffering and the destruction. Retribution...Payback. Good, do it, but when they hunt you down and they will and when they catch you and they will and when they put you jail or execute you and they will, well guess what? Paul Bunyan is a character in their power play and should the actor who plays the part be hurt they always have a stand in, a replacement. You can’t help by destroying the love in your heart by killing or hurting others who hurt you or what you care about. You have to fight to change the rules so that they aren’t free to take all that they can. That’s the only way you can protect me.” Another breath.

“Yes, stand by me when they come to cut me down. Climb up into my branches and let the world know that should they cut me down they kill you. There are already people doing this and so can you. But the real purpose is not to save just me but to let people know what is happening and the consequences to them of these acts of limitless destruction.”

“I can’t do that. Any way you’re not a tree.”

“Of course, I forgot for a moment. I got too into my story. Got to watch that. So I wonder what the point of this was? You are not yet whom you will become however who you will become depends a great deal upon what you do each day of your life. You suffer and have suffered terribly and likely you are not done going through the suffering stage. You blame and name those who have hurt you. One day you will get tired of that and ask yourself, now what? I got tired of blaming others. Not for a long time, and not until I felt that I had struck back. But at some point I was through getting and striking back. I just figured that I had enough of that and it was no longer gratifying and no longer brought me any degree of empowerment. What I decided that I needed to do is get to work to acquire the skills so that I could achieve what I was here for. I had suffered and that suffering is what keeps me in balance. I remember the suffering as a means of staying humble, to control my power so that I don’t irreparably hurt others. I choose to direct my power to helping others, like you do, but in a manner that provides me with a wholeness

that includes providing for my livelihood. I learned that I can only help to the degree that I am willing to also be helped by the people whom I am working with and for.”

“Man you’re too deep. You see stuff I can’t even imagine. I know that’s what you’ve been talking about. But I think you’ve forgotten what it’s like to not know the future like you believe you can see for me. Man, I’m just getting by and not even. I’m no ghetto superhero, I’m just not going to allow anyone pick on someone weaker than they are. It drives me berserk. It’s not something I choose to do or plan to do. I just do it when it’s in front of me. Any way everything you say sounds good, but it don’t change nothing. My life still sucks, I’m still who I am...no hope, not quitting, just no way out of this thing.”

“No, there’s no way out of this thing, not now. You still got more suffering to do until you make the choice.”

“What are you talking about, choice. I didn’t choose my life...just born into it. Can’t do school. Can’t get a job. No one hires someone like me. Do you see any white kids working at any of the fast foods? No. All of them speak Spanish. Got no high school diploma. No one ever responds to the applications I leave. I’m stuck. What choice, huh?”

“You can’t get out of where you are, but you can choose to live a life that prepares you for your time when it comes. There are lots of guys who want to make it as a Rap Star. Are you ready today for that opportunity?”

“Damn’d right I am.”

“Z, how many of your songs to you have memorized?”

“I know some of the parts.”

“That’s what I’m talking about. If the opportunity for you to perform came up tonight you’re not ready. You feel that the songs that you write and that you read to your friends are hot. But you don’t see Rap artists on stage with a notebook reading from them. You can read at an open mike for poets. That’s cool, but that isn’t what you are going for. You’re not doing the work. That’s the choice. To do the work so that when your time comes you’re ready to step into the light and be all that you can be.”

“You telling me I am not doing it. I have written lots of songs. I have made up lots of beats. What do you mean I’m not working hard?” Now Z isn’t saying this sweetly...he’s looking me stoned cold from his hard steely blue eyes, his knuckles are pushing out of his hands, he’s got an ice grin stinging from his lips...he’s pre-nuts, primed to go off...But I’m returning his look with love in my eyes, love in my smile, and love in my body posture and he stares then lets it go and starts to thaw. Wow, just like that...from friend to enemy and back to friend.

Z’s got the right of things as he says, “Now, can we just relax and eat something. I’m starving.”

“You’re right when you’re right. I’m way too deep; so deep I’m often out of sight especially when I get going. Yes, let’s go but together. Thanks for pulling me back.”

“That’s alright. I got your back just as you got mine. Man, no one else would ever dare speak to me the way you do...Can’t believe it how you get away with that. I know it’s for my own good, that’s why I love you. You’re willing to go all the way with me, to the very edge and when I feel so tight, there is your face with that smile, Man the lady’s must just fall into your hands.”

“Thanks Z, that means a lot. We’re lucky we met each other. I just wish that I had bigger hands, Ha ha ha.”

Every time I meet with Z we go for something to eat. I know I already shared this, but it needs to be said again. What is it about eating together? In part it's the eating, and yet in a greater part it's the together thing. I know that my path is split between goals and anxieties. Being with Z is the part that works. Respecting him, focusing largely on his strengths, being open to sharing my story as well as seeking his, consistency; always meeting with him as a priority in my life, being patient...all of this is good. What is split is the part that I'm unable to do. I don't mean I'm not allowed to do it...I'm just not able to do it. I had come to believe that what really matters is spending time with someone, to share life. However I am no longer convinced of this. It sound good, but there seems to be an inner dynamic that operates in a negative relationship the closer one comes to the goal of harmony. It's like what happens to the two positive ends of a magnet as they are brought together. The closer they come the greater is the repulsion of the other. The opposite is true when a positive and negative pole of two batteries are drawn together. It seems that nothing binds better and for longer than conflict of opposites. They are highly attracted to each other.

I recently read Up From Slavery, the autobiography of Booker T Washington, the founder of Tuskegee University. It was the first black institutions of higher learning in Alabama, just a short while after the end of the Civil War. The man's life was dedicated. Mr. Washington was dedicated to education. He was a liberated slave. Knew that education was the path to a productive life and pursued it relentlessly. Education was his single pointed focus, achieving the result of such focus with excellence in his studies when he matriculated at Hampton Institute, the first college for colored people. But along with this dedication was the ability and willingness to start from the very beginning. He was not given Tuskegee University. He was not like most presidents of Universities who are of course hired into their position.

But what of the formation of the University? Mr. Washington was more or less invited to start it. Tuskegee University was originally called a Normal School for Colored Teachers. He was involved with its concept, in the purchase of a piece of land with few improvements. He slept along side his first students in dilapidated structures. He and his students worked the land for food. They sought donations. He and his students helped with the building of classrooms, dorms, kitchen and cafeteria, etc. He along with his students did everything necessary to bring Tuskegee to life. And most importantly, he role modeled the perfect attitude about life and the purpose of his work.

He understood the benefit to the community of his work and he was able to demonstrate to those with resources large and small how that his work would benefit them. He was inclusive of all peoples and religions. He was a source of inspiration to his race and to the white race, and as a result he attracted the best people to become students. He saw each graduate as a person who had learned to value the skills of life: how to grow one's own food, build a residence, have a trade, consumer skills as well as the benefit of the acquisition of general education. Each graduate was a disciple of love and concern for people was a priority. His work manifested through Tuskegee and from Tuskegee came the awakening of a people to the foundations of the real American Dream...Equal Opportunity for All. His work did not collapse and fall to humanity's foibles. It withstood, because he was correctly attuned to the will of creation.

In all my studies of great people it seems that their dedication destroys their personal life. In Mr. Washington's case, that wasn't the outcome. His personal life was

filled with people who believed in his work and the women who became his wives were people who shared his purpose and dream. His children had time with him as he set time with them as one of his priorities. He lived in seeming balance.

I must though bring up one warning in regards to Booker T. Washington's personal life. He had to remarry three times. He didn't go through a divorce; rather the sequence of marriages was the result of his first two wives deaths. He seemed to intimate that they died from over working for the cause of Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers. He viewed them with great love, but so great was his dedication and focus on the needs of his work which seemed to give him extraordinary energy, he wasn't able to acknowledge the frailties of his wives. They didn't have his special strength. They were wonderful women whom he met through their interest and then dedication to the purpose of the school. It was only as he aged, and perhaps weakened sufficiently that his third wife was able to continue to work with him without suffering the physical consequences of exhaustion. To be so dedicated to a purpose that one is consumed...that's a concern.

In Mr. Washington's mind he saw a lofty goal as a result of his belief that white society, or any society will not reject people of talent and skill that when brought to their community they enhance its welfare. He believed this completely and thus was reinforced by the response of certain white people in helping to support the expansion of his work. He saw the best and experienced the best. However, in the general population I'm not sure that his focus of love and harmony generalized into the American Society during his time or soon thereafter. He gave the students what they needed in skills and self-reliance. Fitting in? Certainly in the South not fitting in with white people in where they lived. But look at the work he did with this belief. It was very pleasing and reduced the feelings of guilt in the local white community as to their previous treatment of people by supporting slavery. There is a dichotomy, a paradox, a hidden mystery.

While I have the same inclination to lofty and community based goals, and have worked with all my energies to achieve positive outcomes, there is a split in me such that the outcome of my work is stymied. It's not that I have not been fully dedicated to a goal, to a purpose; it is rather that my dedication was not reciprocated. In fact the more dedicated I became to a cause the greater was the opposing response. I discovered that in the cause to which I became dedicated were energies and factors that had its own form, its own energy, its own personality. More, in some amorphous way it had its own politics. Internal to its politics was that in time the Cause controlled the personalities that were attracted to it; regardless of their position. In a moment of insight I came to understand that the Cause while purporting to enhance the welfare of society and culture actually only existed when the opposing forces were in place.

A Paradox: To accomplish the purpose of the Cause while the seeming external goal was a threat to the continued existence to the Cause. To perpetuate itself, it undermined its purpose and with greater energy the closer the goal was approached. In human terms it "corrupted" the personalities that became responsible for its function. In closer inspection, it was as though the two opposing forces, the problem and the Cause to solve the problem, worked in concert to maintain their identity; their relationship. Problems that were so obvious such as global warming that can wipe out humanity are a wonderful cause. It's so clear, but, no it's not. The opposition to the solutions to global warming is entrenching in the world economy in such places as China and India, while at the same time they are being reduced in Europe, and only faintly in the USA. There are

some mysterious factors in place that blinds humanity and in the blindness of humanity continues to do its work.

I have found this also in relationships. There are powerful factors that inhibit the full consummation of interpersonal relationships. The relevancy of this is that conditions also have personalities that defend any effort to dissolve their existence. The significance of this is that in relating to Z, I am not only relating to his personality, but I am also relating to the personality of his condition that views me as it's enemy; a person that would eradicate its presence within Z's psyche. Because of this I have to move carefully. He may fear that if he should get it together he would lose our relationship.

I monitor my dedication more so than I did in the past. In the past my dedication was all consuming so much so that it poisoned my relationships with my family. Poison of this nature comes in many forms, but the one that is most destructive is to make people feel inadequate should they not keep pace. The poison is powerful the more so when one becomes a fanatic and believes that one's opinions are tantamount to the "Word" of the Lord. The effect is to believe that one is the Messenger of the Lord, something like a Prophet and this is a very powerful dynamic that demands complete loyalty or results in complete rejection. I don't view myself in this manner most of the time, but every once in a while I do get a glimpse of that possibility, which would describe how my family had to choose to keep their distance to preserve their sense of self. So I monitor myself now. I have the same inclinations, but to some large degree I place boundaries on myself so that I cannot slip free to wreck havoc. I kind of incarcerate myself but with release times to be out and about.

Now instead of entering into open ended relationships where the likelihood of me becoming obsessive is greatly increased, I choose relationships that have natural limitations. I work with people and I go home at the end of the day. I have clients and I go home at the end of the day. I have intimate relationships that cannot be fully consummated through marriage. In these relationships I am able to maintain a sense of balance that I am unable to do in long term personal relationships. I have proof of my situation and I have responded to it in a responsible manner. So how does this relate to Z?

I believe that Z knows what his mother knows. She knows that when she is in a personal relationship she cannot help but to bring out the aggressiveness in men that if not directed at her is directed at their offspring. It started with her father and then with her husband, then with her male children. I don't mean to insinuate that his mom is doing something consciously. I can kind of understand it. My second wife took "Pride" in her being weak, but in reality she was terribly strong. This weakness was a shield against what I never figured out. It used to drive me crazy with frustration when she wouldn't learn skills I could teach her to give her a sense of safety and security. If she was cold I would suggest her getting a coat, then she'd be upset because I gave her the impression that she wasn't smart enough to dress warmly. I sought to teach her how to fight so that she could feel that she wasn't so vulnerable. It never happened. Anyway, enough examples. The point is that she also opposed our children from learning basic self help skills saying, "They're still children. Let them enjoy being children. Soon enough they will have to take care of themselves." This attitude challenged and undermined my ability to father; as teaching one's children these skills are essential to being a father. They did learn how to fight and to play sports, but not with the cooperation of my wife. She saw strength as something that could hurt, perhaps her. The issue is that while she moved

toward world harmony and peace and love it elicited resentment and bitterness in me and obviously became issues that undermined our marriage. She presented as vulnerable, it made me look aggressive. She presented as reasonable and it made me look irrational. It caused the children to feel insecure and confused and resulted in anxieties. My strength threatened my wife and I fulfilled her view of me by becoming a threat to her and the family, not by intent, but out of desperation and despair. Was this her fault? No. Was it mine? No. But it was our responsibility. To her, remarriage. To me, find the cause of this mystery.

It isn't Z's mom's fault that men in her relationships become aggressive. It's part of the mystery. Z supports this by being verbally aggressive with her, aggressive with authority figures, physically aggressive in play with his friends, and definitely physically aggressive with any male loose on the street should they look at him without what he feels is respect. Z knows this subconsciously, that his mother's vulnerability brings out the worst in him, and yet he can't separate from her. Her role of vulnerability is designed to make men feel powerful and makes Z feel important. Unfortunately, at the same time this results in him fearing for her health and welfare, which is a big threat for he fears most of all her dying and his being left all alone. Therefore her apparent weakness angers him and he punishes her without knowing it.

He has defenses like everyone else. I believe that to protect others from himself he builds in aggression as a terminating factor that eliminates the possibility of greater disappointment in his self and others. What right do I have to strip him of this? What right do I have to strip his mother of vulnerability...it certainly keeps her surrounded by aggressive men...whose going to mess with her with these types of men standing around her? Hmmmm. Her, vulnerability brings out the man in a man. What an amazing self-defense mechanism. With my ex-wife, it brought out my manhood, but also frightened her, which is what is different about my ex-wife and Z's mom. Z's mom likes to have a powerful protector in her life. It had similar results...conflict with conflict. Still, no one's fault...part of the internal control mechanism of the mystery that affects our minds and undermines our relationships.

Is there any benefit from being conscious of these factors? I believe so. Can they be taught? I wonder if we have to be victims of the mystery. When we are aware of them, can't we then control the influence to some degree? In my life, no. Ultimately I have no control over the mystery as it affects people with whom I am in a relationship. It does no good to educate, to warn, and to seek to protect. It is inside before I know them. It can't be kept out. It can't be eradicated. It can only be partially managed, but in the attempt to explain this, the inner mystery filters the input and the person only receives what the mystery allows. The mystery doesn't want to prevent the formation of relationships; rather it seeks to foster conflict and so it needs to include others.

I respect the mystery. I am fascinated by its ability. I no longer seek to destroy it; in part because it is so deep in people that any effort to reveal it and to minimize its affect is perceived by the host as a direct threat to their individuality, to their identity, to their life. It took a long time to understand this. Seek and destroy used to be my model. At best it just upped and moved out of the way until I exhausted myself, then reestablished itself when and where I wasn't looking. That's why the saying, "Better to keep an enemy close who you know than there be one you don't know," or something like that. But for so long I looked at it as an enemy and then an enemy that I might be able to come to an

understanding. Now it's no longer about it being an enemy, rather just part of life and a part of life that isn't going to go away.

Z is a good person. A super hero. His mother is a great person. A saint. His job is to emotionally abuse her in the thought that he is protecting her, and her job is to take the abuse and to persevere, feeling that in time he will grow out of it and that all he needs is to know that she loves him no matter what he does. They enable each other's roles. They are a perfect match. I must be amusing to them. I like to be amusing. NO. THAT'S NOT RIGHT.

Recently I girded my loins and had a difficult conversation with Z's mom in which I shared an insight as to the need for Z to be verbally abusive and detached when she is hurting. It's about what I suggested above, his fear that she may die. As long as Z is abusive and refuses to help her, her anger and her resentment funnels into her doing things that cause her pain; thus demonstrating her resilience and strength. He sees her struggling with the groceries carrying them upstairs with her knees in pain, thus she demonstrates her strength. When she snaps eventually and "reads" him the riot act, he feels secure in her ability to stand up to him. It's a primitive thing. When I shared this with her she was dumbfounded. What would happen to Z should his mother be incapacitated or worse, die?

I've encouraged his mom to kick Z out of the house for a week or so when he gets into a really bad thing with her. It would be good for him...for a while. But you know that goes back to that "trying to help Z thing." Damn, it's hard to remember not to get hung up in that. But you know, it's really not about one way or the other way: Try to help Z vs. Compassion and just accepting his way of living. Life isn't one-dimensional. It can be. I guess when you're in a coma that's pretty one dimensional, at least looking from the outside in. Two-dimensional; duality, debate, conflict...war. Three dimensional; Combining two dimensions into a functional third: hot mixed with cold = warm. Four dimensional; North, west, east, south = directions unless you're a bird then you jump to six dimensional to include up and down. Then there's the additional dimensions of in and out and thus there's eight dimensions. This is just the beginning of dimensional psychology. There are many more dimensions including various perspectives on an event given the perceiver's life experiences and training. Then there are the dimensions of growth and developmental stages.

Z is fluid, sometimes hot and vaporous, other times in the flow, and of course fluids can be rock solid. I guess when you are feeling completely hopeless, there is no point to life...then fear diminishes and flickers, then is snubbed out. No fear...anything is then possible. 100% commitment. No concern about failure or death. Fight where there is no thought of defeat. Fight to fight and fight to vanquish or to die. I wonder how the gladiators were much different from Z. Imagine being the "doctor" for the gladiators. I'm kind of like that.

In looking at it from afar and from within Z's story is the reality of our culture. So is mine. So is yours. Poor behavior is what a human children have to do to draw attention to the breakdown that adults have so capably swept under the rug. Call it denial. Call it what you want. People don't misbehave initially; misbehavior is what is required to get the attention.

"Ahh, excuse me but the house is burning down."

"Oh, he's just trying to get attention. Ignore him and he'll stop."

“What do you mean ignore me? Get up the house is really burning.”

“Don’t move. He’s just messing with us. Hey what are you doing? Let go of my arm. Stop pulling me. Boy, you are going to get it.”

Well, the aggression is the backstop to the series of earlier attempts to get attention about something that is really important. Aggression is what finally pulls the adult’s head around so that the message can’t be ignored. Of course by that time the issues of cause are so buried in the time frame and the youth has no means of delving into the initiating sequence that necessitated attention. So, it just seems that the aggression is coming from nowhere. That’s what the adults say, “We have no idea why he is this way.” Of course not, no one has truly listened to him for a loooooong time. The truth is the alienation started probably at birth. “Yeah, he was like this from the beginning.”

Cried, wet diaper, no one to change him. “He’s just trying to get attention.”

Cried, hungry, no one to feed him. “He’s just trying to get attention.”

Cried, needs to be held, “He’s just trying to get attention.”

Well Z has my attention. I’m listening. Z’s story with me as one player. Z in my story as a major player. Currently, and I mean currently, Z has demonstrated initiative. Hold my breath. He was able to obtain a CD copy of Fruity Loops and has been composing beats for the Rap poetry that he has and continues to create. He now has the beats and the poetry to go into a studio. I have been encouraging him to memorize his poetry so that should he get the opportunity he would be able to perform. He’s resistant to that part of things, preferring to just lay it out for his street buddies. He has gone into a friend of a friend’s home studio and has told me that the guy will record his songs for only \$50., which I laid on him. No time limit. Do it until it’s done. He hooked this up on his own. I know that there are other costs, but he’s kind of stays at the point of not knowing the reality and of course that is what defeats him in the end. However, I’m on his shoulder and on this round, can it be time for him to make it to the next level?

Now, I’ve been through many cycles of this where out of Z’s cosmos interference comes flying in through some spatial wormhole. Guns blasting, virus attacking...but like the sun arising each morning...each day, each day of a cycle can at any moment be interrupted and the usual altered so that a new day is really a new day. Is this the resurgence of hope? I thought that I have given up on hope and am just swimming in compassion. Oh well. Z has my backing as I have his. We’ll see and I like seeing as I know you do. Everyone likes to be able to see the fruition of one’s care and concern. It just will be defined as a Z Original and I look forward to it or not...because I just dig Z and that’s good for me too.

So he has his poetry/rap and he has his beats that he has created off Fruity Loops but he has no way of taking them to the studio because his CD burner on his computer doesn’t work. So I lay some money on him and send him off to Walmart to buy a zip drive with 4 gigs of memory. At least that’s what I told him to buy. He did buy the zip drive, or rather he was so proud that he bought two zip drives for the money, but they were only 1 gig a piece. Oh well, to him two is better than one even if there is only half the gigs, and besides he doesn’t understand the gig differential and it would only depress him to make it a lesson. Still he was able to load his beats on one of the zip drives and his poetry on the other so off he goes to the friend of a friend’s home studio with his stuff.

The next week, “So how did it go?”

“Great.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Well we did two songs. They came out really well.”

“I’m proud of you. So how many are you going to do?”

“Twelve.”

“Ok. So, two are done. I wonder how many more times you have to visit him to get the other’s recorded?”

“You know that I have trouble with math!”

“Yeah, ok. It seems that it will take five more visits at the studio to get the remaining ten done.”

“That’s going to take a lot of time. I need this done now. I need the money.”

“Well, have you scheduled, made appointments for the next five sessions?”

“What do you mean? He’ll do them when he calls me to let me know he has time. Remember he’s only charging \$50.00 for the whole thing. I’m saving you a lot of money going through this guy.”

“You’re right. It is saving money in making them, still I wonder how much you are losing by not having them done sooner so that you can start to sell them sooner?”

“I don’t get it.”

“Well, Z, say you had all the recording done already and the CD were ready to sell today. So if you sold five CD’s a day, because you order 100 CD’s it would take you twenty days to sell them all, and when you sell them for \$7.00 a piece that’s \$700. That’s money in hand. You pay me back \$50 and you have \$650. in your pocket. Now if he just calls you when he has time it might take two months to get in the next five sessions and in all that time you aren’t making any money. Right?”

“Right.”

“So, the longer it takes him to do the work the more money you lose. So, once the Master CD is made then it’s merely a matter of burning more CD’s and packing them and that much more money in your pocket. So, when you go to a “friend” it’s at his pace. When you go to a professional studio it costs more but it only takes a week to complete the project.

It’s time to move on and to gain the connection in a more loving manner...so too with Z. Z continues to be a fighting machine and I’m engaged to him, not with him, in a type of marriage that unites the dual forces of life with the intent on discovering a path that will lead to a better balance and one that can be accessed by all who chose to get beyond the fascination with violence no matter what form it comes in.

This is all there is up to the minute. Maybe more sometime later.

Three Rap Poems by Z Follows Below

WHAT HAPEND TO THAT HAPPY LIL BOY

By “Z”

WAKE UP EVERY DAY WIT HATE
AND THE SAME MENDEL STATE
SAME CONSTANT SHIT ON MY DINER PLATE
AND THOUGHTS THAT DEGRATE

EVERY STRONG MAN GETS WEAK
BUT IM THE ONE THAT SINKS

IM THE ONE THAT DRINKS
AND STILL DON'T CARE WHAT THE WORLD THINKS

AND AS MY SANITY SHRINKS
TO ME BRINK OF MY MISING LINK
IM THE SEED
AND THE WORLD IS A PUSSY

PUT HERE EVERY DAY TO PUSH ME
THINGS CHANGE BUT BOUNC RIGHT BACK
BUT IVE CHANGED AINT NO RETURN IM NEVER COMIN BACK
I HAVE DREAMS WEHRE I BURN BUT I CANT LEARN

HOW TO BE ANYONES BUT MY MOTHERS CONCERN
I HATE THE TREES AND THE BIRDS
I HATE MY RAGE
TO A POINT BEYOND WORDS

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPEND
TO THAT HAPPY LIL BOY
I THINK HE DISAPEARED WIT HIS PRIDE AND JOY
NOW HES JUST A TARGET

FOR THE WORLD TO ANNOY
IM A TRAIN WIT NO BRAKE
AND I FEEL LIKE ALS DODGE
AS I COME BARLIN INTO THE GARAGE

IF THIS CONSTANT FAÇADE
IS THE DEVIL
AND NOT GOD
THEN THAT MOTHER FUCKER CAN SUCK MY TOUSER COD

IM THE BUTTER FLY EFECT

All Right Reserved. Coypright

DALY TIMES
BY "Z"

all i can see is hard times
and it seems to me it aint gonna stop
you can stop givin a fuck
or bunny hop round a cut throught buznis just to be on top

livin alone adopts taunts
and all your dirt haunts you to the point
you cant sleep
dreams of forgetin everything your regreting

insta spending the rest of your days pretending
it aint real
and less you walked in ma shoes
dont tell me you know how i feel

i get so mad i wanna kill

its a thril never get my fill
and im on empty
needed weed instda theripy

aperintly i got a lota dudes starin at me
tryin to be scarin me
but aint no fear in me no tear in me no cheer in me
a lot a beer in me aint no cure for me someone needs to hear me

i see things a lot more clearly
things that the eye dont see is erery
a lot of faces and im leary
thats why weed stears me

keep your head up
and your cup full
talk about the kinda bitches that i pull
beat it up till its a pot hole and laugh

spat im glad i handled that
now thats hit the road
get some drink
fuck what a haater think

got it juicy like ocian spray
fuck what you say
hit the hay anyway anyday this is play
but dont let it turn to a bad hair day

im on some crazy shit
so dont trip on it
cause even if you do i dont give a shit
cause im the shit hate it or love it bitch

All Rights Reserved. Copyright

HAPILY EVER AFTER
BY "Z"

im surrounded by actors
hapilly ever after
but i stay holdin it down like the packers
back stabers and slackers are nolonger are factor nothin but laughter
cause for me its happlyever after

livin life the way its intended
mended and now new
and whoever dont like it than thats you
cause ive done it all and lookin back im on a new track

runin tryin not to be gunin
up in the sky sitin on a cloud
silently not givin a fuck
done pushin my luck

with all the shit on my aplication

im suprised im not under encarseration
nolonger in pertisipation of anything un cacation
raisin the steaks my head will never ach again

and while you others dont know who you are
i know im Z
and thats sifitiant for me
you know that

on my block im respected
i can have you put in a car and ejected
im done getin faded that shits over rated im more educated
thinkin bout how ima make it

my lifes real cause i never fake it
if theres a problem for now on ima shake it
no reason to take it thats the definition of a man
still the king ill do whatever i want you know thats true

All Rights Reserved. Coypright

2. B

Ever hang out with the terminally ill? No hope for getting better...terminally ill. It would be good for everyone to volunteer at a hospice for the terminally ill. Start a new relationship with someone who is dying. "Wonder, I'm alive another day..." They wake each morning with that destination approaching? The wonder of just being there with someone in this phase of their life.

I just had rotator cuff surgery. Had to take off eight weeks. Finished my commitment to the three boys with whom I was working; professionally that is. I mean that with Z, I kept the relationship going after the professional element was ended. I guess it was the threat of his committing suicide and his mom too. That was a good reason. So, I felt that it would be a sin to end the relationship with Z. I still feel that way. But with all of the other boys with whom I spent time with, when the professional relationship ended so too did the relationship with the boys. Why? Because they had a path to travel and I chose a path with this restriction.

To be effective with a client it usually requires me to be able to form a relationship with the parent(s). When I start, from the parent(s) point of view it's all about the kid. "The kid is doing this. He's doing that. He won't this. He won't that. He's disrespectful, throws tantrums when he doesn't get his way; becomes verbally and at times physically aggressive. He doesn't do his chores. He doesn't do his homework. He eats too much. He breaks into my bedroom and steals money. He has no friends. His friends are no good. He keeps weapons in his room. His room stinks. He won't bring back the plates and silverware when he eats in his room. He leaves the food in his bedroom. He doesn't wash. He doesn't do his laundry. His hair looks crazy. His clothes are ugly. He wears the same clothes every day. He won't wear a pair of pants more than once. He takes my stuff and loses it. He takes his stuff and loses it. He no longer has a bike because it kept getting taken. The kids at school bully him. He bullies the kids at school. He gets in fights all the time. He gets beat up all the time. He picks on his siblings. His siblings are embarrassed to be seen with him. He has poor social boundaries. He speaks to people he doesn't know. He stalks a girl at school. He plays with himself in public. He won't come out of the bathroom. He takes two-hour showers. What's he doing in there? We know what he's doing. It's a sin. He comes into my bedroom when I'm changing. What's he doing? He sneaks to Internet porno sites. He orders porno and runs up my credit card bill. He's always talking and texting on the phone. My phone bill is out of control. He obsesses on video games, playing from the time he comes home from school until 12:00 am, sometimes all night. He bad-mouths my boyfriends. He steals the car in the middle of the night. He won't clean up after the dog. He forgets to give the dog water. I found marijuana in his room. He gets angry at me when I go into his room. He says I need permission. I pay the bills so I don't need permission. He gets angry when I clean his room and put his stuff away...I can't wait until he's eighteen. Out into the street. I want him placed in a residential school. I can't give him a key to the house...I don't know what he'll do. He waits until I get home to get in. He goes to the restaurant when he has to go. I locked up his bike because I'm afraid he'll get hurt. I won't let any of his friends come over. I don't know who they are. He won't let me meet their parents. He says it's crazy to meet his friend's parents before I let any of them into my home. I won't let him date unless I meet the girl's parents. I want to know what kind of home she

comes from.” Sounds reasonable, from these parent’s point of view.

I don’t know the truth. I just look to establish some semblance of balance. When people’s relationships with each other are in balance then probably things are going along well enough. “Well enough” is my motto. “How are things going? Well enough.” Not great, not bad. Getting people to accept “Well enough” is when I begin to feel that I have done good work with the kid and his family. You’d be surprised how much resistance there is in getting to “Well enough.” It’s like the last place any of them want to go.

I recently worked with a teenage boy who seemed to be obsessed with accessing pornography on the internet either at a web site or as a rental from some porno webstore. His parents were very religious, mom is a Christian therapist and the stepfather is studying to be a Special Education Teach. They quite understandably disregard all their psychology training and view pornography as the devil’s work.

“Our son is possessed by the devil.”

The stepfather related righteously, “Of course I called his girlfriend’s parents and informed them of our son’s devilry.” That relationship ended. “Because he was working as a teacher’s assistant with the church’s Sunday school, we had to inform them, and so he quite rightly is no longer able to volunteer with the children. Play with the Devil, got to pay the Piper. Of course the youth group leader had to be told, and so I guess somehow all his peers started to look at him strange and wouldn’t talk with him.”

OK, that pretty much stripped him of all positive and meaningful relationships. “You know we just hope that our son will be able to start to develop friendships.” So without access to his previously acceptable church peers the boy trying to please his parents hope of starting new friendships started hanging out with, how would he ever know, “unacceptable peers,” which was somehow not too pleasing to his parent and just further proof of their son’s defect.

“You know it might be the devil. I’m no authority in that area. Still it could be another possibility in addition to it being the devil’s work. It could be that his brain isn’t working right. Is there any chance that your son was addicted to alcohol or drugs at birth?”

Stuff. You know deep stuff. Like psychological stuff...the kind that’s hidden and will be kept hidden or else. That kind of parent stuff. The mother seemed to be quite happy to relate the following.

“B was adopted from a drug mother. We, I mean my former, now deceased husband and I adopted because we couldn’t conceive, except once he was adopted we did get pregnant.”

She then related, “You know, to be fair to our newly conceived baby, in order to be able to give the pregnancy the attention it deserved, I wanted to return B. We should have, but my husband and the infant boy had bonded and so he wouldn’t cooperate with my wish to return him. By the time I got pregnant my husband and B already had a great relationship.”

“How did B get along with his brothers when they were born?”

“His relationship with his two brothers who were born after his arrival was ok until my husband contracted cancer and ended up dying when B was nine. He was traumatized but “wouldn’t accept therapy.”

A drug baby, losing the bonding parent...attachment disorder possible...brain development problems from being born addicted at birth.

I inquired as to whether because of the fetal alcohol and drug addiction had a Neuropsychological Evaluation ever been conducted.

“No. Should we have asked for one?”

The mother a therapist and B’s stepdad studying to be a special education teacher, so I may have, hmmm, copped an attitude, but I hope not. It’s amazing but not unusual that the last fifteen years of research into Fetal Alcohol and Drug Addiction Syndrome has not penetrated into the practice in the field of mental health, Wouldn’t it make sense to look for this at the front end before coming up with any series of disjointed diagnosis and an endless trail of medications?

What I have discovered with my kids I work with is that an inordinate number of them are living on the Parental Edge. The Parental Edge is a cliff where life has brought them, to the edge of the cliff with one parent hand holding them from going over, but with the other hand giving a good solid push. These children who have been subjected to drugs and alcohol during the pregnancy...well this syndrome definitely affects the development of the brain and the body. Isn’t it true that many of them are born premature and underweight and remain so for many years of life? The result: slow to develop motor skills, have definite cognitive and processing deficits that affect the integration of verbal and auditory input, and most devastating, the part of the brain that regulates behavior and provides social boundaries is not fully developed. The consequence of this is that they live in a closed world of chaos, and so they experience and I guess cause chaos in the home and struggle in school.

It’s hard to imagine that state in which most of the verbal input is garbled and the visual input is transitory so that while the kid may know where here is, he can simultaneously have no idea where here is in relationship to anywhere else. A so very difficult application of the spiritual teaching of, “Be Here Now.” So a bit frightening don’t you think? Our social environment is so demanding and their brains are not nearly processing the input fast enough to make any sense out of all the input so their poor brain quickly short circuits and to the outsider this appears as the kid is exhibiting low frustration tolerance and impulse control issues that lead to aggressive behavior. In reality this behavior is nothing more than a form of seizure where the child has absolutely no control over the behavior and then is held responsible. That’s like putting a kid with epilepsy into therapy or a group home for having a seizure.

No doubt, most of the youth in juvenile hall have been subjected to their mother’s addiction or PTSD. So in this family, even though this mother is a therapist and the stepfather is studying special education, they were apparently completely disconnected to the latest and most provocative research.

So, not to be demoralized by this I asked the kid’s therapist. It never occurred to her. I inquired as to whether a Neuropsychological Evaluation could be conducted, as it would put context into B’s impulse and addiction syndrome and perhaps simultaneous de-demonize him in the parental eyes.

“We’ll look into it, but who is going to pay for it?”

I try not to get pissed off when the welfare of the kid comes down to “Who’s going to pay for it?” I mean...how much does it cost to have the kid go down the path to juvenile hall and then to adult incarceration? Hmmm. I don’t show my angst...I’m polite, supportive, and nurturing. “Yes of course. It’s so tough to come up with a way of paying for it. Still it might be worth looking into and of course it will help me help the family.

You know, should I be able to reframe his behavior from a character defect and his being possessed by the devil, to that of neurological problem in the Executive Function of the brain that manages behavior, I could then educate the boy and his family as to effective interventions to help him. No.? Not a good idea?"

Anyway, back to B's mom's recitation of the history of their relationship.

"It took a few years of unsuccessful chemo-therapy before my husband died; a period of trauma for B. After his father passed away B began to have relationship problems with his siblings, which accelerated, when I got remarried. Soon B was also having increasing problems with his step-father...and after a number of years of this during which he had become more and more aggressive...attachment disorder...you know to save the rest of the family, I had him placed in a Christian Residential Home on the East Coast where he spent two years receiving therapy."

B told me subsequently that it was when he was in placement that he learned how to hack into computers and to break and enter closed off areas of the residence. You learn a lot when you live in a residential setting with other kids diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Kids also learn a lot when they are placed in juvenile hall...the next stop for this kid.

Recently he had broken into a neighbor's home while they were on vacation and he ordered porno from their cable provider and ran up hundreds of dollars in charges. He didn't hide his work. I asked him why he hadn't made more effort to hide his work and he told me, "Then no one would have known what I was doing. It's hard work to get into where I'm not supposed to be and it's no fun when no one ever knows what I've been able to do." When their bill came it was all there. He admitted to it, no excuse. They had him arrested and he has a date for a court hearing.

His parents were experiencing the same at home. The monthly bill would come with hundreds of dollars of porno charges to their cable and Internet providers. Because he couldn't be trusted in the home he was living in the garage. He didn't care. But his living in the garage wasn't the whole story. I later was told by B that his stepfather was using his old bedroom, sleeping separately from his mom. I asked B's therapist about this.

"Yes, B is telling you the truth. After his mom married B's stepfather and because of B's increased aggression, his stepfather was trying to take the adult male role in providing discipline, but had evidently been 'too tough' on B resulting in his being reported for child abuse. You know what's interesting was that B's mom divorced him at the same time that she sent B to the Christian Residential School on the East Coast. They weren't reconciled until she brought B back home. I never inquired as to the reason why their sleeping arrangement was in this form but it was amusing to B, at least he said it was. This probably had something to do with his lack of respect for his stepfather."

So, he was relegated to the garage and locked out of the house-proper from bedtime to the morning when he had to get ready for school. If he had to use a toilet, well they provided him with a large pail.

"Well, since he is locked out of the house during the night, when is he sneaking the porno?"

"Oh, yes he's locked out, but that doesn't slow him down. He sneaks into the house through the doggy door. It's a tight fit, takes him a while but it's definitely doable. Then he hacks into the Internet while the rest of the family is sleeping. I've changed the

password on my computer repeatedly but that hasn't slowed him down."

I inquired of the parents, "Have you ever been the victim of an addiction? I have. Chocolate. I mean that I can go for a long time without eating chocolate as long as it's not around me. However if there is some in my view...most likely it will next reside in my mouth. "

The mother was quick to reply, "I have that addiction too."

OK, I thought, we have an angle. "Well, how do you manage your addiction to chocolate?"

She replied openly, "I don't keep any in the house."

"That makes sense. That's how I manage it also. So why don't we apply the same management strategy to your son's addiction to pornography? Let's make the house free from accessibility to pornography? The cable and the Internet are too accessible. Why not just remove the cable and the internet router at night?"

The mother found that unacceptable. "Removing the cable box at any time gives B control of the house, and I won't have that. Besides, that would require certain restrictions that would impact his brothers free and proper access to the Internet and cable. What's more it's too much trouble. Too many wires."

Wow, won't do it. So, just more of the same. The path was set in concrete. The kid was addicted. The supply of the addiction was kept in plain view and fully accessible. But so what, did I quit. No I didn't.

"Ok, it's too difficult to remove the cable box and the Internet router. I understand, too many wires. Also keeping control over the house is important. I have one more suggestion. Why don't you and your husband shut off the doggy door at night since that's his entry point? Can't get into the house, then no problem, right?"

"We can't close off the doggy door. The whole point of the door is for our dogs to be able to go in and out, especially at night when we're asleep."

"Well, here's a thought. You feed your dogs and they're big. The whole point of having dogs is of course they're cute and friendly. No better friend than a dog. Also, having big dogs has another purpose, and it goes back to the original reason why people tamed the wolf. To protect the family. Let the dogs be on patrol at night in the backyard. Lock up the doggy door, keep B out of the house and simultaneously give your dogs some sense of self-esteem by letting them protect the family. It'll help their mental health. How about it?"

"No, that won't work for our family. I can't lock the dogs out of the house at night just so B can't break in. It wouldn't be fair to the dogs. Anyway B's a sneak and a liar. He can't be trusted. He's causing us to go broke with all of his charges. We got to get rid of him. Court date set...juvenile hall waiting. That's where he belongs. We can't afford to send him away again. The best thing for our family is for him to be in jail."

I felt that the situation was urgent. Heading for placement in juvenile hall. "Can't we just make some changes to make it a bit more difficult for him to get the porno?" Nope. What's going on here? Why won't the parents allow me to help them help their son? The choice for them seemed simple. Cut off his access to pornography or keep it open and send him to jail. Their choice was jail.

I have a theory that explains why parents won't do what's right. With the types of families with whom I work, I find this a repeating theme. The better the kid gets the more the parent's issues are exposed. The problem kid is critical to keep the focus diverted

from themselves as adults and away from their relationship problems with their spouse. The most difficult obstacle for improving the situation is the parent's need to have their child dysfunction. They will do anything to sabotage the efforts of their child to use the interventions that I teach that would improve the home life. It's not always an impossible obstacle to overcome. Sometimes I am successful. But in the cases such as this one, no way. The sad part of this, as was the case with Z and his father, the kid will do anything to please their judgmental parent and if that requires for them to misbehave, well that's exactly what they will do in order to maintain the relationship with the parent. This is what they call co-dependency.

All of my skills useless...the secrets were not to be revealed without punishment to the revealer. "Hey, let's just get it to where he can't access the porno in the home...maybe not perfect, but good enough." No. I was about to be fired.

During one meeting with B and his parents the boy related that a few days before while sneaking out of the garage, the garage door had fallen on his back. The garage door wouldn't stay open, the springs were old and so to hold the door open he propped it up by placing some paint cans on top of each other. Well, while crawling out beneath the door he must have bumped the paint cans and down came the door, right onto his back. The parents seemed concerned that he might have gotten hurt but when I suggested that they needed to get the garage door fixed they claimed that because of all the porno charges run up by the kid that they had no money to get the garage door fixed. I suggested that there was a problem which was as following: Because the garage door was broken, the door to the house was locked, and the garage windows were blocked off from easy access that B was in danger should there be an urgent need to exit the garage, say because of a fire. Of course, saying nothing about possibly getting a disabling back injury from the broken garage door. The parents still refused to have the garage door fixed and absolutely wouldn't leave the house unlocked at night. That's when I had to inform them that because I was a Mandated Reporter that I would have to call the Child Abuse Registry and make a report for endangering the life of their child. That was it. I was out. Good enough wasn't going to have a chance.

"I know that it's not OK for him to be watching porno. Adults do, but he's only sixteen. Still it seems to me that all of his oppositional behavior would dissolve should we allow him to watch it at times."

I still wasn't quite done. In my next supervision with the therapist I inquired whether she had any influence on the parents.

"Some."

"Then why don't you work with them on the pornography issue and let's get them to at least compromise to some degree and allow B to have Playboy or some magazines like that. Maybe such a compromise might just work out. He's sixteen. It's not unusual for kids that age to be aggressively seeking to access pornography in any manner that they can."

The therapist looked at me, and nodded. "You are probably right, but you know that we can't do that."

"I know. Still his stealing, lying, aggression...OK, but come on, just a little talk."

"Well, maybe."

Later.

"How did it go?"

“No where good.”

“I’m not going to make progress without this in place, but still, I’ll see what I can do. You understand that the parents are unwilling to follow the interventions that I offered which requires them to remove the possibility of his accessing the porno sites at home?”

“Yes I do. As I told you when we began, the mother is intent on ridding herself of his presence.”

I spoke with B of the righteousness of his anger and frustration in not being wanted. He denied it. I spoke with him of the passive/aggressive element of his behavior. He accepted it. I spoke of the affect of being born addicted to drugs and alcohol and its affect on the part of his brain that makes decisions about “right and wrong.” He listened. He asked me the definition of addiction. He asked me what phase he was in. He also wanted me to know that he enjoyed breaking and entering his own home and accessing the porno sites no matter the consequences. It thrilled him and thrills are what he needed in order to keep his suicidal inclination under control.

“Listen, you’re caught between a rock and a hard spot. There’s nothing you can do to help me and my mother feels the same way. So, take a deep breath and just step out of our way. This is between her and me and nothing you can do to interfere. We’re into this. You know, co-dependency for now and always.”

The mother fired me. So did B in his own passive way. That’s how it turns out sometimes. It’s a voluntary program. Free will. Still I wonder whether free will requires an element of sanity to sanctify it.

3. M

It's time for a bit of insight. Looking inside my head is always weird, but I do it often enough so I no longer freak out. The youth with whom I work are really lost. I'm called in to work with them as a last resort before a decision can be made to have them placed out of the home. Sometimes they're headed for an out-of-state residential school placement like in Z's case, or like in B's case, headed for juvenile hall. My job is to delay the placement and if things work out, to teach the family how to live together more harmoniously so placement is no longer an active option. Basically I'm the last stop, the last option. You'd think that the kid and his family would be receptive to my services.

As I've described before, in my opinion, the problem is that at times the youth's behavior isn't really anything but a reflection and a scapegoat for the parent's unresolved issues. As long as the youth is the problem, then the parent's issues can remain buried. It isn't unusual in my work to have the obstacles become increasingly more difficult as progress is made. As the youth's behavior alters in a positive manner the more exposed are the parent's personal and interpersonal issues. At times this causes a crisis so intense that the parents sabotage all of the work so that the youth regains his role as the "problem."

I was assigned to work with M. M was sixteen and lived with his mother. She worked as a buyer for a local company and six months before I began with M the mom had him returned from two years in residential placement to live with her again. The therapist reported that he had been doing exceptionally well in placement and that the mother disregarded the therapist's advice to allow him to remain in placement. Upon his return he was in a special program at school to help him transition from placement to a regular school program. It wasn't going well. The mother was extremely hostile toward the treatment team and M was acting verbally and physically aggressive within the home. When I met M and his mother she immediately informed me that it wasn't going to be easy as she was at the end of her patience and felt that this was all a great waste of her time. OK, good to get off on a note of reality.

A word or two about the diagnosis. The diagnosis is developed by the treatment team. The therapist makes a few direct observations at school and interviews the teachers. As regards to the dynamics in the home all of it is based upon the statements by the parent(s). There is no feedback as to M's behavior in the community where M is independent of adult supervision. M also has limited and filtered input into his evaluation by either his teacher or his parent(s). Based upon this information and an interview by the psychiatrist who spends a short amount of time with M and his parent(s), a diagnosis is made. The psychiatrist then writes prescriptions for medication based upon the diagnosis. It is my experience that because the therapist and the psychiatrist do not spend time observing and interacting with M and his family in the home or with M in the community that the diagnosis is often questionable. At best the "evidence" is circumstantial and based upon the feedback of the teacher and the parent(s) who more often than not have their own issues that cloud their judgment.

From my experience what brings the attention of the treatment team to the family is M's behavior. Without the behavior by M being so noticeable, the family problems would not come into the open. This means that M is the hero of the distressed family. I firmly believe that M and all of the other boys that I work with are acting out to signal

their distress. That doesn't mean that they don't have serious emotional distress caused by circumstances that are not within their control. It does however mean that the concept of therapy is not holistic. It strictly focuses on M's most extreme behaviors, comes up with a treatment plan, and then makes an effort to provide behavioral interventions to reduce the number of incidents. Dealing only with the behavior and not the issues often just suppresses or represses the conflicts. It wasn't always like this.

The strict focus on behavior commenced as the result of the rise of the conservative religious segment increased influence on the right wing of Republican politics. Their viewpoint is what happens in the home is the domain of the parents and therapy needs to be strictly limited to the behaviors of the child as they relate to school performance. They strongly related that family issues are the domain of religion and that if the family turned more strongly to religion that their issues would be diminished. So the therapist's ability to engage the family with their issues was to be strictly guided by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. So the outcome of this was the beginning of the collapse of the separation of church and state. Therapy no longer was able to spend the required time exploring family issues from their emotional source, such as the issues between the parents that fostered their need to keep the child as the focus so that the parental issues could remain veiled. The bottom line was that therapy should keep its nose out of family life. What goes on within the home is the business of the parents and the church. Need help with family life? Go to your church, Stop thinking and trying to understand what is happening. It causes stress. Just have faith and do as you are directed. It will all work out, if not in this life, then in the next."

When County Health Care Agencies succumbed to this philosophy of care, behavioral modification as a modality became therapy. The modification of behavior had to be defined by an action, the length and intensity of the behavior, and the timeline for it being extinguished. As a result the more effective model of involving the whole family in therapy became limited so as to allow the family contact with therapist only to 45 minutes, once a month. This of course severely restricted the ability of the therapist to establish a therapeutic relationship with the parents and other members of the family and thereby also restricted the potential of any long term effectiveness of therapy.

The function of the severe restriction of family therapy was to render the therapist less effective, thus supporting the goal of undermining that effectiveness so that people could be easily convinced that therapy was a sham and that the only real salvation was a return to "Family Values and a return to the Church."

Again, the philosophy behind this change was that family problems should remain within the family and any emotional needs can be best met by taking the problems to one's church; Faith Based therapy believes that all emotional problems stem from swaying from the teachings of one's church. "Step back into the fold of Jesus, Allah or G_d and one's anxieties and issues will be resolved." Hmmmm. Maybe and maybe not.

Behavioral management. That's my job: Therapeutic Behavioral Coach, (TBS). Well M had behaviors galore. The imperative that directs my interaction with clients is to focusing on negative behavior and not issues. In a new relationship the fastest way to alienate someone is to focus on their areas of weakness. The imperative is an oxymoron, "Form a positive relationship by focusing on negative behavior." I don't think so. Especially for youth who have serious self-esteem challenges, the message of focusing on negative behavioral is, "You are a major screw up and you are the source of your

family's pain and suffering." Of course, I did not choose to allow the directive of a strict behavioral focus to destroy my effort to form a relationship with M. I would never start by initially focusing on his problems. To give some insight into his mind this is how our first meeting went.

I had arranged to pick him up across from school at a Jack-in-the-Box. Happily he was there on time; a good indication. Before he even got into the car he started talking. The issue was abortion.

"So, you're a social worker type. You must be for abortion."

"Hi, M. I'm pleased that we are able to hook up."

"So, you want women to murder their babies."

"Hey, I'm hungry. Let's stop off and grab something to eat."

"OK, I haven't eaten all day."

"About abortion. I'm interested in preserving life. But I guess I'm not supportive of preserving pain and suffering for a lifetime. I'm actually neither for nor against abortion. It's a difficult situation for a woman to be in so I guess I feel compassion for what ever she chooses to do."

"Life starts at conception. Abortion kills that life."

"I can't argue with your viewpoint. I'm glad that you feel so strongly about the issue and are willing to share with me about it. Most people just argue and debate the issue, but I'm really interested in the actual feeling experience a woman and the man with whom she conceived go through during the decision making process. Also, I really interested in how they cope depending upon which choice they made. Gee, M, it's rare to be able to hang out with someone who can explore the two perspectives without getting really emotional. I would like us to be able to this."

"Me too. I went to a rally with my mom, aunt and cousins this weekend that was held along Pacific Coast Highway. We held Pro-life signs and it was great when people honked in support as they drove by."

"It's wonderful to be able to stand up for what you believe, to be supported by your family and to share with them the experience of assertion."

"So are you saying you support my viewpoint that abortion is evil?"

"You know what I support is you and your effort to demonstrate your feelings. Like I said abortion can be debated and we can experience polarization, where people become very emotional and upset, or we can explore each other's points of view. That's what I'm most comfortable with."

"OK, but after we eat."

As with all the boys I work with, getting something to eat at the front end of our outing is both therapeutic and nurturing. Nurturing is something that is always missing in their relationships with adults. Adults tell them what is wrong and what they should do. There is no time spent just hanging out as companions or as a child and parent like making dinner together, eating and calmly discussing the day, and hanging out playing videos or going for a walk and then grab an ice cream on the way home. Getting something to eat sets up a good sharing experience. I guess I've said this before, and yet I seem to need to keep repeating this as I write.

Being with M was amazing. He's very intelligent, has a great memory for information in which he is interested and he loves to share. One of the most fascinating aspects of being with M is once he "warms up" to the fact that I am interested in what he

has to share, he begins to speed up throwing ideas, facts, and celebrity gossip at me flipping from one subject to another before I even have a chance to get past the first or second word of my response. It's kind of like watching a rock skip across the water, or someone flipping through the TV stations as fast as they can press the remote.

A lot of what he threw at me during the first few months of our relationship was for shock value. He liked to give me choices. "Which would you prefer? To have a hundred pound block of concrete dropped on your head or to have your head crushed in a vice? Another choice would be like, "Would you rather be born with no balls or would you rather be born with no ass hole?"

"Gee M, where do you come up with these choices."

"Come on. You got to choose."

"No I don't. These are not choices, but traps."

It became a game. He would throw choices at me and I would evade. It really was absurd, but quite funny. Funny is a great way to reduce stress. Reduction of stress opens up other avenues. Of course that assumes that both parties would like a reduction of stress.

Actually the more I evaded the crazy questions the more intent he became. He liked giving me a tour of a local bookstore. Especially he liked sharing books that had gruesome photos of torture. One book was full of photos about criminals who had been shot and killed by the police, going back to the Old West and through the gangster years of the 20's and 30's. He then started to share books that were semi pornographic; books that went into detail about homosexual and lesbian relationships. Of course I had to let him know that I wasn't going to allow him to share those types of books with me as they were inappropriate within the context of who we are--I'm an adult and he being a minor—and why we were spending time together. He didn't like the boundary settings and actually kept attempting to show me the books even after I told him that I wasn't open to looking at them.

"M, I'm not going to look at those books with you. We can look at other books together, but not like these."

"Why, I thought you were open minded and wanted to explore with me various attitudes and perspectives on social issues. Now, you want to censor us in what we can discuss."

"M, you're right. There are limits that are set to protect me from liability such as those of a sexual nature. I'm a professional. You know this. There are limits on what I can do, and doing this pushes us over those limits. So, you're right and I'm glad that you are so sensitive and can immediately recognize when you have come up against a boundary. So, I can't stop you from looking at those books when you come here on your own. But when you are with me, if you persist, then I won't be able to bring you back here again until you agree to accept the limits that I have to work within. So think about it and then let's talk about it after we leave. So, we can stay for another fifteen minutes, and then we'll have to go. During this time I'm going to look at some travel books and we'll hook back up in a little while."

He came up to me about five-minutes later still with the book in his hand and again tried to engage me.

"Look, M, I'm going to leave. I'm too uncomfortable to continue with this outing. We're only a few miles from your home and you know how to get back there. So, you

have a choice. Put the book back and meet me at the car, or you can choose to get home on your own. I'll wait for you for five minutes at my car. Hopefully you will be there so we can continue with spending time with each other."

"OK, I'll put the book back."

"Great. I'll wait for you at the exit."

Boundaries. What are they and what role do they play in positive social interaction? Duh!

"So M, what are boundaries and what role do they play in positive social interaction?"

"Do we have to talk about that right now?"

"No. But we do have to think about it so that we can have confidence that when we spend time together we are usually respectful of each other."

"Huh?"

"That's what thinking about something is for. You think, and then the Huh" goes away."

He wasn't done with boundaries. He started turning off my car engine when I was parking at McDonalds where we always at first went to get something to eat. He actually seemed shocked when I grabbed his hand the next time he tried to turn off the engine.

"M, it's one of those boundaries things."

"Why?"

"Why is like Huh. Remember, that's what thinking is about. You think, and then the "Why?" goes away because you remember the answer.

"Man, you're weird."

"M, that's why we can get along so well."

Another time a boundary came flying by while we were driving somewhere and he saw this fine looking young woman walking along the street and he rolled down the window, stuck his head out and yelled a sexual suggestion.

"M, that's embarrassing to me."

"Really?"

"Really embarrassing. Where's the respect? Out the window. The thing about me wanting to spend time with you is well of course I get paid. But, more than that I like you and I want to keep liking you. You can help me by allowing me to feel as the driver that I am managing my responsibility well. The thing about yelling out the window is that it's chicken shit. If you want to say something to her, just ask me to pull over. You get out of the car and speak to her in a good way so that she doesn't have the cops all over us. Otherwise, just behave."

"Man, you got all sorts of rules."

"Rules are good sometimes, and sometimes they're not. That's something we could discuss should we ever get to that part of our relationship."

"I'm not getting it."

Let's wait until we sit down to get something to eat.

Cool, he went along with this and so we made it to where we intended to get something to eat.

"OK M, now that we're seated and have had something to eat allow me to give some feedback. Think M. When we're together mostly you are talking, but there's not much room for me. I like a lot of what you say. It's interesting stuff; something like

hearing all the answers to Trivia Pursuit or hearing a recitation of Ripley's Believe It or Not. It's fun to be with you. Still, there must be a reason why we're spending time together that has a lot to do with your therapy. I wonder about that each time we spend time together. The area that I would like to focus on is the benefit of us having a two-way conversation. I believe that having the ability to just talk together and to explore an idea is important in having positive social interaction with people. So if you say something, the next sound is not more of your voice. Instead you must leave me room to think about what you've said then I need more room to reply. Next, it's not onto another topic. To help us having a conversation you then would benefit from taking a moment to reflect upon what I've said. Then you then say something that directly relates to what I've said. This goes back and forth, which allows us to explore our thoughts on the subject. The outcome of this approach is that then we will have succeeded in having a conversation."

"Why, you think I don't have anyone to relate to?"

"Well? Does that response directly relate to what I just said? It sounds like a tangent; something that kind of relates, but really is a redirection of the point that I was focusing on"

"I have an internet girlfriend don't forget."

"Yeah you do and so I'm going to give permission for us to change the topic, but I'm still going to bring what I've shared into what we talk about; specifically the importance of what I said before about conversations. So, how is that going, you and your internet girlfriend?"

"Well she's just fourteen, but we've been dating for three months, so I guess I do have relationships."

"Where does she live?"

"Las Vegas."

"Must be frustrating be so far apart."

"We're going to get together. I'm going to get my mother to drive me to meet her."

"Sounds interesting."

"Do you think my mother will help me out?"

"Hard to know. So far she hasn't allowed me to meet with her except at the group meetings."

"I'll ask her to meet with you."

"That would be helpful, because unless I can meet with her I might have a hard time keeping our relationship going. One of the requirements of our program is that I have to be able to work with the parent."

"OK, I'll get on it."

"That might be helpful. By the way I've been wondering about how it's going with your mom?"

"Terrible. She keeps interfering with my effort to make friends. Can you believe it that she wants to meet the parents of my friends; to interview them to make sure they are up to her standards. Hell, my mom is a wreck. She has no friends herself. She keeps coming down on me even when I haven't done anything."

"Yeah, she sounds tough to have to live with, but like I said, I need to be able to meet with her or there's little I can do to help you."

M was very helpful in assisting me to meet his mom. He told her he really needed

me in his life. When she didn't immediately respond I had to call her to inform her that unless she allowed me to meet with her that I would have to close the case as it was a requirement of the program to have parent involvement. I feel that it was the combination of the limit on my involvement requiring her participation and the fact that M plead my case with her that turned things around. It's important for M to advocate for my involvement. Here's something to think about. Somehow regardless of the parental issues the sound of their baby crying for something shifts the parental obstinacy and allows them to "nurture" the open beak.

I arranged to meet with her after she got off from work, which coincided with me returning M home from our outings.

"She's often late. I'd let you into the apartment but she has taken away my house key."

"What do you do after school then?"

"I go to the library and they have the Internet. I spend a great deal of time on My Space or Facebook. That's how I met my girlfriend." He explained that often he just had to hang out until different times on different days. Every so often he was left waiting for his mom until 10:00 pm because she went out after work.

On this day she turned up about fifteen minutes late. She parked her car in the garage then without greeting M or me walked toward the apartment. She was wearing a trench coat, dark glasses and a large hat pulled down low. We followed her up the stairs and into the apartment. She didn't say anything as we followed her up to the apartment. I was surprised that she closed the door as she entered and M had to knock for us to be allowed in. She didn't greet me even then and so I just sat down on a couch. She sat opposite of me, sitting rigid still with the trench coat, the dark glasses and the large hat pulled low. The family cat came over to investigate me and the mom suddenly got up and went to sit in another chair that was facing away at a ninety-degree angle. I played with the cat for a while and then I addressed his mom.

"Thanks for meeting with me. I know how tiring it must be to have another professional in the home."

"Exactly."

"Well, I appreciate it; your being so straight forward with me. I know that living together with M can be overwhelming for each of you."

"What do you mean, for each of us? I work, do the shopping, provide the place to live, buy his clothes, cook his dinner and is it too much to ask him to help. He's sixteen and acts like three."

M just sat passively listening to her.

"Having help from your son would be great. I just wonder about the trouble he is having in understanding the need and the benefit from his helping you."

M had shared that no matter what he does to help around the house it only results in criticism.

"I'm sure there's a lot of difficulties living with a teenage son."

"You think? I know that the apartment is too small and we're sharing the same bathroom...so I'm looking for a bigger place...but they are too expensive."

"You know I can't help about that. However I can be helpful in regards to assisting the improvement in the relationship. Let me share what I know is helpful. It is important to have M help out, but for some reason he doesn't. I might be helpful to

understand from his point of view why he doesn't put out more effort."

She turned to M and asked him directly. I stepped in at that point and asked to set up a structure whereby each of them could share their viewpoint while the other person was required to listen and not to interrupt. So I suggested the following.

"OK, this is how this works. Instead of speaking to each other, I want each of you to explain only to me while the other person just listens. So mom why don't you start and explain the function of chores?" She did, and when M started to break in and make a point I reminded him of the rules of only listening while the other person spoke. When mom was done I then asked M to explain to me why he struggled with doing chores.

"Well, first of all I do chores. It's just that no matter how I do them it's never good enough. It's discouraging and I decided that not doing them was easier on me emotionally rather than to do them and to have to be put down. No one likes to do work that isn't appreciated."

I fully expected his mom to blow up but she didn't. To my surprise she empathized.

"M, I feel the same way at work. I've been there for seventeen years and my boss still treats me as though it was my first day at work. I hate it when he just won't leave me alone to do my work, but no, he has to sit over my shoulder each and every day. It sucks. I wasn't aware that I was doing the same thing with you. I'm a terrible mother. I hate being a terrible mother. I just want to be able to do better than my parents and I can't."

She started to cry and then became so overwhelmed, she had to get up and go to her room. Wow. I never expected this from all that I've heard about her. She's always been portrayed as a dragon. (Sorry about the dragon reference. Most people don't know anything good about dragons.) Back to mom... She came out a while later.

"I'm better now."

"Raising your son is a real challenge and I know that it is a challenge for him too."

"No one understands what I go through. Not just about him, but in my life."

"I couldn't have been easy."

"I work for a terrible man, but I need to keep the job. My ex-husband wants nothing to do with us so it's all on me. My upbringing was terrible and now I find that I'm doing the same thing they did to me. It's horrible. I can't stand myself."

This conversation was making me feel nervous. It was so out of character with how the meeting started with her dressed and acting like one of the cartoon characters from Spy vs. Spy in the old Mad Magazines I used to read. Was I supposed to be encouraged by this expression of vulnerability or could I expect a complete reversal when she realized what she was sharing?

"There is nothing more difficult than trying to fix something without the manual. What happened to you and to your family was a result of influences that at the time you had no control over. What most people do when they don't have the skill to fix something is that they go to a professional. Like I would like to be able to fix my car, but I just don't have the mechanical gifts that are required. So I hire a mechanic. True I hold my breath hoping that the car will continue to run after I leave the shop. But, that's what I do. When I take something apart I am so relieved when I can just put it back together, never mind fixing it. It sucks, but that's how it is. So, I guess at this time I'm your "mechanic" but there is nothing concrete about relationships. It's so amorphous. Still, I believe that I have

the ability to use metaphors well enough to give some structure to our effort to improve what's happening here in the home.”

“So you believe that you can get M to do his chores and to treat me with appreciation and respect?”

“Sure. Still we have to do some work together to get it to that point. The choice we all have is to work cooperatively or not in this venture. I don't expect a commitment at this point, but in a while we are going to have to make a decision. So, can we kind of call a truce until we are ready to decide whether we are going to commit to a goal that satisfies both of you?”

“What do you mean truce? M does his chores, treats me well that's all.”

A truce is when two parties haven't yet decided to end the conflict. However a truce is valuable when both sides are exhausted and rather than to completely destroy themselves in the effort to win the fight, they take a break. Something like the rounds of a boxing match. After three minutes of fighting, they withdraw to their corner for a minute to get their breath. A truce is something like that. I wonder if we can agree to back off from the chores and the expectations so that each of you can take a breather?

“Well, that's just great. It seems that in a truce I have to do all of his chores, still be mistreated, and some how this is supposed to help me get what I want out of him.”

“Good point. However the point of the truce is to take a break from the conflict which just continues to excite the emotional distress which blocks the ability of the mind to make choices that actually lead to the intended goal of family cooperation. It seems clear that the choice both of you are making is not leading to your intended goal, so to continue to listen to yourselves can only perpetuate the conflict and worse, be demoralizing.”

“I can't agree to this. This just gives him everything and me nothing.”

“I can see your point. But why not just give my suggestion some thought over the next week, and when I see you again we can look at it again.”

“Who said that I am willing to meet with you next week?”

“I don't know. Probably because I can feel your sincerity when you say you want your relationship with your son to be better than what you had when you were growing up. We can get back next week on the same day and time, if that would be good for you.”

“We'll see.”

“OK, we'll see is good enough at this time. I'll call you in a few days. I really want to thank you for taking the chance to meet with me. I feel that you have a great deal to share with your son that will benefit him and I would like the opportunity to assist this to happen. M will you walk me to my car?”

After shaking hands with his mom we walked back to my car.

“She's terrible. She can't treat me well. She'll sabotage everything you try to do. You'll see.”

“Well M, let's hold off on conclusions for now. Thanks for helping to set up this meeting. It was very helpful to me. I look forward to seeing you in a few days. Same time right?”

“OK.”

My relationship with M's mother improved gradually, or so I felt. I met with her innumerable times, and often she would open up about her feelings of guilt in regards to her parenting. Of course I offered her “interventions” or strategies that would assist her

relationship with M. To my surprise it wasn't only the mom that wasn't inclined to practice the skills, but M was no more willing to practice. I of course can't be sure that M didn't practice the skills as a result of not getting sufficient encouragement from his mom. Regardless of this I really wanted them to at least try to practice the skills in reflective listening.

For example I presented the following comparison to the typical antagonistic response to an unpleasant statement with what we all in the field of mental health call a reflective listening response.

Unpleasant Statement: "I can't stand the way you behave. You never do anything to help me."

1. Typical Antagonistic Response: "What do you mean? I do everything. It's just never good enough for you."

2. Reflective Response: "Thanks for sharing that with me. I can see how upsetting my behavior has been. Maybe we can talk about it and seek a solution."

I worked with M and his mother and gave them a manual on how to develop the new dialogue. The mother's response to this was, "Well I haven't looked at it since we last saw you, but at least I still have it. It's in the bedroom." A few weeks later her response was, "I haven't looked at it yet at least it's out of my bedroom and it is now on the table by the couch where I relax when M isn't home. Of course I was encouraged. I always hope for the best for the kids and their family."

When I first met with the therapist on the case who I greatly admire for her ability to relate to her clients and families she warned me that in her work with M's mother everything went well for six months. She then related that at the six month period when she made the effort to transition from just listening and being supportive to seeking the mom's cooperation in looking at her issues, the mother withdrew and cut the therapist off. So all along I was using my "exceptional skills" to form and to broaden my relationship with M's mom, and was successful as long as I allowed her to feel in control. I don't care who's in control as long as the work is being done.

OK, keeping the relationship for as long as I did was rewarding, but the work wasn't being done. The fact that the mom allowed me to meet with her and to look at issues and for her to be able to be vulnerable and relate her feelings of guilt gave the feeling of progress, however when I applied the test of whether the interventions that I taught her were being used... Well, no they weren't. In fact the manual never made it into her hands. It just sat there on the coffee table for months. Why wouldn't she do some of the most basic work? Without her effort M wasn't able to make any progress in the home. In the beginning he related that he attempted to use the listening skills with his mom, and she would do everything to defeat him. So, she defeated him in the home. She won, he lost. What did she win?

The therapist related that she felt that the mother was borderline. My understanding of the borderline personality is that they have experienced intense trauma as a child in regards to a loss of a critical relationship or a primary caregiver abused them severely. In either case, the loss of the relationship or the betrayal fostered by the abuse creates a barrier to the child ever developing a healthy relationship.

The dynamic operates in this way. There is still an intense desire for a nurturing and fulfilling relationship and the initial phase of relationship building is usually successful. They are "perfect" in their presentation and it draws a person into wanting to

spend time together. The initial experiencing of intimacy quickly gives rise to extreme feelings of longing and a desire to consummate the relationship. This can be followed by a desire to formalize the relationship through a long-term commitment as in marriage. However, the longer the relationship goes there is a simultaneous feeling of increased vulnerability and anxiety. This anxiety stems from the early childhood loss or abuse and the anxiety leads to feelings of fear and soon the person's subconscious mind projects a defense bubble that starts to increasingly filter the partner's behavior and interprets the continued interest of the partner as an attempt to be controlling. Control is so closely attached to trust, that as the feeling of being controlled increases it gives rise to the feeling of distrust that just feeds the anxiety. At some point the borderline person will increasingly reject the sincere concerns of the partner, who is trying to hold onto the relationship. This rejection will persist until the relationship is no longer tenable. It usually blows apart with the feeling by the borderline that the other person who in becoming increasingly confused and frustrated is being disrespectful and abusive; a complete projection of the borderline's traumatic experience as a child.

Being aware of this I never allowed my relationship with M's mother to become too effective. When she challenged my integrity I would accept her statement and simply ask for her patience while I adjusted my approach to be more understanding of her point of view. This strategy kept the fragile relationship alive. However, keeping the relationship was too stressful for her. So when the subconscious defense to drive me away by her insulting me hoping to draw frustration and a reaction to her statements failed to achieve the desired goal of providing her a way of dismissing me from her, she unwittingly increased her abuse of M. This was the trap that I eventually fell into. I just can't stand it when someone I care about is being hurt and especially when that special someone can't get away from the abuser and can't learn the defensive skills that would make the experience less traumatic. M was in this and because of his emotional problems wasn't learning those defensive postures.

The terrible reality of this abuse is that it isn't intentional, but a consequence of the borderline personality overwhelming the good intentions of the mom. There were points when she would say as I pointed out before, "I can't believe that I have been treating M like this. This is exactly what I never wanted to do. I doing exactly as my parents did to me. I'm so horrible." It took me some time to actually come to believe her. She just went into an altered state of mind in which her abuse of M seemed the right thing to do.

In this state of mind she felt fully justified in locking the refrigerator to keep him from eating. She felt justified in removing all of the self-soothing outlets such as removing his boom box, the X Box, the TV, the telephone and the computer so he couldn't access the Internet, which he used to communicate with his Internet girlfriend. She also would withdraw her permission for him to use the Internet at the public library and lock up his bike to make it difficult for him to get anywhere. At times she would also threaten to hurt his cat. She went so far as to keep him up at night by raging on the phone about his negative behavior. There were times she would charge into his room in the middle of the night to yell at him for some perceived misdeed. She called the police often to report that he had physically abused her, but according to M he was just trying to hold his mom off when she felt that it was OK to hit him.

In a subsequent conversation with his mom, in response to something or other that

M had done that she felt was insensitive and abusive she let out a bit more this time directed at me.

“You think you are helping him, well maybe, but it definitely isn’t helping me. He just manipulates what you teach him to hurt me. Now, everything that is going wrong is because of me. He won’t take any responsibility for anything that he does. He just states that I shouldn’t judge him and shouldn’t lay any consequences on him because you’ve taught him that it only increases his anger and resentment of me.”

“Yes, that makes it hard to feel like supporting the interventions that I’ve suggested. Still, being the adult in the house it kind of all starts with the parent. So when you want him to be patient and think about the results of what he does, he looks to you for that behavior to emulate. I’m sure he can be manipulative, but it’s in how the manipulation is handled that role models for him how he should deal with conflict.”

“That’s all a bunch of bullshit.”

“I guess you’re right and that I’m saying that everything largely depends upon what you do. M is a reflection of you, although I’m working with him to separate his self from that. M looks to you for his motivation. When he sees you using the interventions he will eventually become more open to using them also. This will eventually lead to a diminishing of conflict. Yet this takes commitment on your part because a change in his choices and behavior will take time with the need for you to remain centered in your effort to use the interventions. When you do so for long enough he will begin to trust that this can really happen. Until then he will probably continue to test you to see the depth of your commitment. I have seen when you’ve expressed yourself well using the interventions and then he just throws it back in your face. That’s to be expected. It isn’t easy, but you really don’t lose anything by this because after a while the change will begin to take place and you will be empowered by this experience.”

“I don’t know. It seems like a hustle. I give and give and get nothing back except for the promise that it will get better eventually. I’m already on the edge of getting rid of him. I don’t have it to keep on going like this, promise or no promise. You just don’t get it, do you?”

“I guess that I don’t, but I am working on getting it and will keep on doing so. I have faith in you. You’ve made it this far and I respect that. I have the feeling that you want to make this happen in a good way and I’m here to help. Let’s see how this goes.”

“Isn’t it time for you to go?”

“Yes, but I want to bring up one more item. I was also wondering whether there is any chance for you to get dental coverage from your workplace so that M can get braces. His teeth are a mess.”

“Are you kidding? Why would I help him out like that when he treats me so bad? I could get insurance, but I’m not going to do that. He’s on his own. I’m not going to help him one bit with anything. He hasn’t earned it. He’s just like his worthless father. Take, take, and take some more and when I need help, vanished. Let him get a job and get his own insurance if he wants his teeth to all line up.”

This treatment of M would persist for weeks at a time until she would suddenly snap out of it.

“So M, I wonder about life at home.”

“She’s better now. She returned my house key, gave back the Internet, the use of the phone, the TV, and my bike. We went out to dinner and to a movie. Everything is

good.”

The next visit four days later, “She’s flipped out. I hate her. She needs to die. She took everything away again. Can you believe it? He then told me about her My Space site.

“You know what? She won’t let me use her camera. Do you know why? She’s taking porno shots of herself and posting them on her My Space site. She must think I’m stupid. I found her site. It was easy, and there she is sitting leaning forward wearing a loose negligee. That’s disgusting. If I found her site I’m sure anyone else can. What kind of man is she trying to get posting such a photo?”

This was normal for them when I first started with M, each putting the other down in the most humiliating manner. I guess I would like to take some credit for the improvement that began to take place. After a month or so of my being persistent in meeting with her even when she would tell me to get out, she became more cooperative and less oppositional about meeting with me for the family meetings. I think that she started to like me and wanted to meet with me. Well I had been warned not to allow her to attach for given her problems this was just too much for her; to like someone who actually would treat her with respect. When she started to be willing to meet she made most of the weekly meetings. She would participate in the session and gradually she began to look forward to the time when I would present, explain and role model an intervention. She would even allow me to discuss with her the outcome of her choosing to strip M of his self-soothing outlets and she listened as I emphasized how important it was that he has access to them so that he could practice the strategies to reduce the aggression in the home. So eventually she gave him more space, allowed him to make a few mistakes without retribution, and she actually started to think of how to help him in his relationship with peers. She again allowed him to use the Internet and the phone so that he could reach out and receive calls and email.

It seemed to help for her to “confess” to me when she was “lucid” and that’s what it felt like; a confession. During the confession she was very hard on herself and it usually led to a kind of a catharsis; an emptying of guilt. She repeatedly related during these episodes that she couldn’t help herself when she lost her balance and fell into this other state of mind that led to her abusive behavior. Usually at the end of the confession she would commit to working harder in maintaining herself and to use the interventions that I had presented. However she was completely unresponsive to my suggestions that it would be a benefit to her for her to reach out and to seek therapy. She then told me that she didn’t have insurance. OK, I wondered, is this true? M’s therapist didn’t know.

I worked with her and with M to anticipate the cycle that was so predictable and developed with them strategies to cope with the episodes when they occurred. I worked with them on being able to anticipate the episodes by becoming sensitive to the telltale signs of an impending cycle. It started to work and their relationship improved. I was pleased.

Then M’s therapist’s husband got transferred out of the area and M and I were told that because she was leaving that M’s case would be transferred to a male therapist who I had worked with when I was assigned to be Z’s coach. Hmmm. He was the kind of person that I really like; there’s something about him that just resonates. However, at the same time the limitation of being a therapist prevented him from connecting with certain clients. Therapists work under a serious disadvantage enveloped within a castle of rules

of ethics that really are a defense against liability issues. The most important aspect that gives a therapist the ability to assist people who are emotionally traumatized is the skill to form a trusting, safe and secure relationship. However the ethics rules interfere severely with meaningful relationship building.

Of greatest importance in relationship building is commitment. In truth the therapist can only be committed as long as M can fit the parameters set forth by their individual practice and or by the agency with whom they work. When the parameters cannot be met—the ability to pay in private practice and the ability to make progress toward behavioral goals when working for an agency—then the relationship must end. It's not the fault of the therapist, but at the same time there is a level of unintended betrayal; so much for commitment and so much for trust, safety, and security.

Because of these professional limitations that interfere with the effective delivery of helpful services, the therapists do a slow burn, which may last for years, but eventually, poof, they are burnt out. It's not fair to them and it's definitely counter therapeutic and unfair to their clients. Still, so goes life and coping with life is what therapy is all about. The truth is that the barriers to effective therapy are like a stacked deck of cards. You can't win even if you win a few pots. In the end you are poorer than when you started. So working with a therapist, which is a major part of my job, is all about whether I can finesse the therapist into a more effective interface with the client.

Well, the crisis of life with the youth with whom I work is that they are also either on the verge of burn-out or are already burnt-out with having to be repeatedly “encouraged” to take the chance to form another and another and another time-limited relationship with a mental health provider. This is especially true when they have to engage with a male therapist. The therapist represents to the youth everything wrong with them. It's the therapist that states, “You don't just have a problem relating, you're mentally ill.” That's a hard hit to any kid. In our society there's nothing worse than being called out for being mentally ill. And yet, this person who gives them a lifetime sentence, a label, is the one that the kid is supposed to feel good about and work with to get better.

Adding craziness to craziness, the kid soon finds out that the therapist has no power to change anything. The therapist can't order the parents to learn and use the interventions. The therapist cannot order the teacher's to adapt and adjust to the client's problems. The therapist can't change things in society that leads to his parent's dysfunction. The only power the therapist has is their ability to form a voluntary relationship with their client, their parents, and the teachers. Given the restrictions put on them as described above, with the once a week meeting with the kid, too much is happening over which the therapist has very little influence. Still, the kid is supposed to get better through the time-limited relationship in which the bottom line is, “Yes you are not the cause of your problems, however only you have the power to change things for yourself.” Now, is that fair and does this burden of responsibility function to the kids benefit? Hardly. It's really a statement of impotence, and it's no one's fault...it's just the way it is.

Adding to the obstacles is the gender issue for therapist. There is something that happens when a boy meets up with a male therapist that has to do with projection. Usually the males in the kid's life have failed them and have failed to keep them safe and secure from abuse. Often the abusers in the kid's eyes are his father and his male teachers who try to use their male energy to keep the kid under control. There is an inherent threat

and an inherent failure built into the relationship between the kid and the male authority figures. It's not that the kids don't have trouble relating with their mothers, they all do, but no matter how much trouble they have with their mother's they are still deeply attached to them. There is a biological thing working that only attaches to the mother and not the father. On top of that biological thing, there is the mother's distrust and even shame in regards to their relationships with the men in their lives. Many of my kid's mothers were sexually abused as children either by male members of their family and just that is enough to sour their lifetime relationships with men. For their male children it is torture, for as the child grows into manhood through his teenage years, his body changes start to become similar to the mother's childhood abusers and the repressed tension of that abuse begins to leak out all over their sons. Subconsciously, to protect themselves from their son's developing testosterone the mother's do everything they can to emasculate the boys. Of course, this unintended behavior triggers their son's aggression, an attempt to call for help and an immediate attempt to thwart the emasculation.

Their father being unaware of any of these dynamics, except in the way they are treated by their wife, respond to the aggression of the boy by being men. They step in and grab the kid, and to their shock, their wife reprimands them and often reports them for child abuse.

"What are you doing? I was just trying to protect you."

"You will not touch him again, ever. Do you understand?"

"What are you talking about? He was trying to hurt you."

"I don't need that kind of help. It's always men who got to use their physical stuff to solve problems, isn't it. Isn't it?"

"Don't talk to me this way. Are you crazy?"

The mom is communicating that she doesn't trust her husband, or live-in boyfriend, which ever it is, and there is nothing that hurts a man more than to be told by the person he loves that he isn't to be trusted. Unfortunately, the emotional problems of the mother, given her childhood, should she persist in treating her man in this manner, at times it can lead to physical aggression by the male. Now her childhood fears are generating the destruction of her relationship, but in her mind she sees it as a continuation of the fact that men just are no good. This of course again is also being projected onto her son as he matures.

It all gets twisted. It's like a trap for the man and a trap for the mom because all of this is coming from her sub-conscious mind and she is totally into it as if the man's effort to protect her is a threat, as she experienced the threat of the male coming to abuse her when she was a child. To be sure both the mother and any male that would be with her have serious issues that just keep worming their way up to the surface during their relationship, and the kid gets squeezed between them in the process. Remember, the families that I work with are seriously dysfunctional and so what's the surprise that their thoughts, feelings and behaviors are manifesting that personal and interpersonal dysfunction.

To the kid whose biological connection and loyalty is to their mom, then seeing the aggressive behavior of the male toward not only him in the male's effort to provide discipline, but in physical aggression toward his mom as the man falls into the dysfunction, becomes completely confused. The youth watching the adult male(s) strike out at his mom in reaction to frustration and feeling the mom's attempt to emasculate him

sees a male role-model. Soon the youth is emulating the same behavior, not only in his behavior toward his mother but also toward the adult male in the youth's attempt to "protect" her. For the adult male to continue to exist within the family dynamics he must make a choice that is a lose – lose situation. Either he proclaims his loyalty to the mother regardless of her ability to function, which means going along with her no matter what, or to leave. If he doesn't leave in time, the mom will throw him out through divorce or the threat of child abuse charges when he rises to the occasion of defending her against the frustration of her son. It's a sad situation for the adult male to be so strong, yet in the reality within these families, he has the least amount of power to have a positive influence given the mother controls what happens. With no male power in place, the discipline within the family deteriorates

So, what does this mean? Things are all backwards, upside down, and inside out. If this weren't true, then things would already be working out, but they're not, not at all. It also means, don't place one of the youth that I work with, with a male therapist until I can break the stereotype through my relationship building skills to form a meaningful relationship as a male with this youth. It would be more therapeutic for the therapist to wait until I succeed as a male in forming the committed relationship, which would allow me to then assist the kid to transfer his newly developed openness to a male; to the male therapist. As the kid bonds with this aid to the therapist he will have succeeded in forming a positive relationship with two adult males. With these successes he will have the experience and the continued support and encouragement of his current adult male relationships that will provide him with a foundation to then form positive relationship with other adult male authority figures, such as a male parent and teacher.

Unfortunately, in M's case he had deeply bonded with the female therapist and given his issues with attachment went into a tailspin when he lost the ability to spend time with her. The new male therapist never had a chance, at least not for a good amount of time. Of course the problem with the whole system of care as far as my individual works goes is that I am only called in as a last resort, a last step before taking the youth out of his home and placing him out-of-state. I have the burden of things being done backwards. I need to be called in before the therapist starts to work with their limitations, but the system doesn't provide for that, as the therapist is the first stop and the one ultimately responsible for all therapeutic interventions with their clients. Oh well. What else is new? Who made up this system of care...no one in particular; it just sort of evolved into this form and there doesn't appear to be any focus for making the changes that would better serve M and the therapeutic team.

So M and his mom were making progress and somehow I had passed some tests for both of them that gave me some room to work with them and to help them to learn some social skills in parent/child relationships. With the mom being now willing to meet with me and to allow me to provide role modeling in positive communication skills and the benefit of remembering to provide positive verbal cues in behavioral management it seemed that they were on a trend toward greater harmony and cooperation. After working with them for about five months M's mom began to be more flexible and less punitive. She might even be said to have become somewhat supportive of M and his goals for greater independence. I was proud of my work...and yet still recognized that given her history a wall was approaching beyond which previously she has not been able to go. I guess my whole thing with her was to delay and to delay some more the coming collision

with that wall.

We finally hit it in the ninth month of my work with M and his mom. An interesting gestation period. I wonder what significance it has. Mom reached a progressive peak during a group meeting with all the providers during which she advocated for M and committed to working with the team in a cooperative manner to help M. This was the first and unfortunately last moment that all of this was lined up and in place. I was so proud of her and during the previous two weeks had worked hard and so had she to open her mind to a shift in her role from being M's biggest antagonist to being his cheerleader and a mom who would work for his benefit. I couldn't help myself but to feel some degree of professional and personal pride in her progress. I was honestly hoping that it would be the first step through the door that leads to freedom from her past anchors.

In one meeting she had told me of all the abuse she had experienced: sexual, emotional and physical from her family. She also related that she had a long drug history with some pretty nasty drugs. I spent a number of sessions with her and M discussing the affect that those particular drugs have on the brain's ability to function including breakdowns in memory, superimposition of memories, and general visual and auditory processing. I was totally unconditional in my attitude and supportive of the effort she was making given all of these terrible influences. She appreciated the positive regard and thus took some chances in improving her parenting skills. Still, she was borderline and I never forgot that.

Anyway at the conclusion of the meeting during which she praised all of the providers in the team for the hard work and commitment that they had made to her and M we all kind of cheered. I was apprehensive though for this peak of positive regard also put a huge strain on him. After experiencing with her months of repeated cycling from short moments of clarity each being followed by a month or so of collapse she had convinced me as to the accuracy of her belief that she had no control over these cycles. She repeatedly stated that she didn't have the strength to resist her personality disorder.

I had worked hard with her on the concept of managing one's disorders rather than working to control them. I believe that one can't control the personality as to do so only fosters a power struggle; a polarized state...sanity vs. insanity. I carefully worked with her to build an alternative structure of behavioral choices that focus on recognizing the personality disorder, learning how to anticipate an oncoming episode, the benefit of being able to call upon a support system, and a strategy for those who live with her to be able to have a safety plan for themselves should she go into a full episode. While I was with her, she got it. But as soon as I left, being that she couldn't accept M being in the role of providing her with the essential verbal cues to put the plan into operation, it couldn't be sustained.

So with a beaming face of pride, with the accolades of the treatment team still in her ears, she walked out of the meeting arm-in-arm with M, and as the door closed behind her and not fifteen steps down the hallway, she became unglued.

That was the beginning of the end. Nothing I did could allow me to overcome the fact that I brought her to such a great state of progress and accomplishment knowing full well how "impossible" it would be for her to maintain it. So in her subconscious mind I violated our trust as I chose not to remember the outcome of success...the border of love brings on the depths of isolation. I betrayed her. I tricked her into her failure. How did I

lose sight of maintaining the balance in her favor where I was just one rung below her and not above her as her savior beckoning her up higher and higher into a zone that within which she couldn't breathe.

When she collapsed she was like a sand crab having just spotted a seagull and after giving a bubbly scream, retreated and began digging down as fast as she could go...back to darkness and safety. I called her a number of times.

"Hello."

"What?"

"Just hoping that we can meet as scheduled for the weekly family meeting."

"Not available."

"Well it probably would be helpful to just review what is happening."

"Not interested. Anything else?"

"I wish you well and hope you change your mind."

"Not going to happen." Click.

I guess it was really after a month or so of her increasingly abusing M; interfering with his relationships by again going back to stripping him of his use of the phone and the internet, locking up his bike, and taking away the self soothing outlets that I had been encouraging him to use to deescalate in the face of the abuse that I came finally to accept that his mother was not going to be able to recover from her borderline success that spiraled her into this abyss.

Again, I was face-to-face with a hopeless situation in which someone I cared about deeply was entrapped. In Z's situation I was able to continue with him after my professional services ended mainly because I felt that I could trust his mom not to betray me. It's not like its illegal for someone in my position to relate to a client after termination as it is for a therapist. Still it was deeeeeply frowned upon. In fact it would have caused me a great deal of stress should I be confronted by my supervisor as the biggest fear that the institution has is being sued with no means of defense except to sacrifice me. With M, I couldn't trust his mom. I had absolutely no confidence that her care for M would supercede her delusional state of mind when she was lost in it and thinking that everyone was her enemy.

When I finally concluded that any further effort to obtain M's mom's cooperation in supporting the interventions that had been working so well was futile I started to feel that M needed to escape his relationship with her. Also, without the parent's participation I am normally not allowed to continue to deliver services. I was however able to obtain permission to continue for a few months longer and my emphasis turned from M acquiring skills to assist him to handle the stresses in the home to skills that would be necessary for him to leave the home.

By this time M had turned seventeen. I began to work with the therapist on motivating him to start to work on a transition program that would lead to independence when M turned eighteen. With M I was straight forward explaining that I could only meet with him for two more months and I wanted to work with him specifically on consolidating his newly acquired skill in communication and to help him understand that he needed to start to focus on what was going to happen when he turned eighteen and his mother had no further parental obligation. This was my intent. However M had a different thing going on: to survive the loss of another meaningful relationship. Abandoned again.

Doing this kind of work has a built in mechanism that terminates meaningful relationships. I had to end all the relationships with the kids except as stated before, for Z. These relationships were incredibly meaningful to me and I like to believe also to the kids and for many of the parents. The supportive rationalization for being willing to enter into this type of work is that even though we can be engaged only for a limited amount of time, the work that is done can still be critical in the life of the youth. I do believe that, but it's got to be more than that; something that relates to my own healing of issues that have traumatized my youth. I had suggested a number of times that instead of terminating that it would be more therapeutic to maintain at least a once a month contact to support the gains that had been made. Too often with the loss of the supportive relationship and without the cues that the presence of a TBS Coach provides the families at times decompensate and the cycle of dysfunction continues. Sad.

Why do I choose to work with only those who are lost and with whom I cannot continue in our relationship? Maybe because I was one of the lost and through my own journey I found myself. “

“Hey man, how's it?”

“Different”

“Listen, I'm looking for this guy, maybe you know him?”

“I don't know. Maybe. Do you have a photo of him?”

“No, that's just it. I know him but I don't. You see we got separated at birth. I mean he's like my twin brother, but he's even closer than that. He was me. So I guess he might look a bit like me, but then I don't know.”

“Hmmm. Let me look at you for a minute. You do look kind of familiar, but I can't place where I may have seen you.”

“I do look familiar? How could that be? I've never been in these parts. But you know, now that you mention it, you too kind of look familiar.”

“That may be true, but that doesn't mean I have always been from around here.”

“So what's the name of this closer than a twin, being you?”

“Jonathan.”

“Why isn't that strange. That's my name also. Now this does bring back some old memories.”

“Hey, is there any place we can sit down for a while? I'm kind of tired. It's been a long journey getting here. By the way, where am I anyway?”

“Why, maybe just where you've always been going and I've just happened to come to wait. Yeah, there's a place I know where we can sit down. Come on, it's not far.”

Have you ever seen the painting “Underground Railroad” by Paul Collins, of Harriet Tubman leading slaves to freedom? Ms. Tubman was a woman who escaped slavery and then made thirteen solo missions back into the land of slavery and helped over seventy other slaves make their way to freedom. Have you ever studied Eastern religion and come across the story of the man who attained Nirvana. Yep, Nirvana, complete enlightenment. Well, he gets a choice. Cruise on out into the Universe and merge with the All or return to earth and become a Bodhisattva, a Buddha, a teacher of the way. Now, I'm not suggesting I am enlightened, but I do like to believe that I can shine some light. So what this means is that as messed up as I was and having found myself and formed a structure of healing, I decided that I just want to share it with those

who haven't found their way and would like to. My work allows me to do this and make a living that is not too excessive; a requisite for maintaining my sense of balance and harmony.

However, a bit more intimate than this is the fact that the way I am doesn't put me in the category of being able to make friends with what society likes to think of as normal people. I'm eccentric and though fascinating, I am eventually stressful to be with as my perceptions are uncomfortable. It's very much like people loving the art, but feeling very uncomfortable with the artist. So, I hang out with the mentally challenged for they find meaning in my perceptions and this provides me with the type of company that appreciates me hanging around. I like that. The magical thing about my wanting to hang out with them, and maybe for company, is it feels so good to the kids that someone really wants to spend time with them and seems to be enjoying himself while being together. This is a very powerful dynamic; being with someone who really enjoys being together. It opens up all sorts of possibilities that are previously locked up.

Being in the field of mental health allows me to be with the type of people with whom I can relate and what I find of greatest importance, discovering the pathway to relationship building is important to them also. To me that's the whole issue of my life. Everyone works very hard to have a life, but the paradox is that it's in the area of relationships that the collapse takes place, whether on a personal level or a geo-political level. People just struggle living close together and struggle being able to continue to get along and to be continually supportive and encouraging of those with whom they live. I accept that, but also I am challenged by that to explore means and methods of alleviating some of the blockage to a harmonious life of relationships.

For a long time I felt that discovering the key to disharmony was my life's mission. Just for the fun of it, let's say I developed an understanding of the key components that prevent harmony from being a lasting experience. So the shift took place when I began to share this understanding and I discovered that the more I shared it the greater was the resistance to it. So it seemed that discovering how to "save the world" was only another step, with other steps to be traveled, such as acquiring the skill to teach the lessons of "world saving" so that people could incorporate them into their lives without feeling like their lives were being tossed up and over. In my life I have met certain people who have "made it." They all said the same mantra, "If I could do it so could you. All it takes is hard work." Well, this isn't true. There are plenty of people who are working hard who never make it. So, making it is one thing. Telling people that they can do it too is another thing. The third thing is the question, "Can it be taught?"

When I informed M that we had about eight more visits and that I would like to focus on his consolidating his gains. I was a bit sad that he was only superficially cooperative by giving me the verbal feedback that I wanted, but he wouldn't do the work. He continued to be completely focused on getting and keeping a girlfriend.

There were two key points in my relationship with M. First he was completely isolated when I first met him and he was terribly lonely. Having a relationship with me was such a psychological lift for him. The second key was his desire to have a successful relationship with a girlfriend. During our first two months he would just converse by skipping from subject to subject not allowing for any interchange of thoughts. During the third and fourth month our relationship progressed to him reporting to me all of his efforts to form relationships with girls. I finally was able to encourage him to carry on a

two-way conversation by working with him in the fifth and sixth month on essential social skills to achieve his goal of having a girlfriend that would stay with him for longer than a month. I also was able to use this lever on him practicing “just listening;” an essential skill if one wants a girlfriend. It actually worked.

When he mastered the two skills: listening and conversing he finally became willing to have a face-to-face relationship with a girl instead of just one over the internet. I then worked with him on being able to conceptualize the essential steps in forming a relationship that may lead to intimacy: infatuation, acquaintance, friendship, and then intimacy. He really struggled with this sequence tending as any teenage male will do, to leap from infatuation to intimacy and bypassing the “really getting to know you” phase that takes place during being acquaintances and then friends. He just couldn’t slow himself down, and in fact the girl with whom he attached wanted even more speed and satisfaction to be had during intimacy than he did. He had no chance. What teenage male could slow it down when the girl was opening up so quickly?

Of course, I was providing him with mature adult male feedback the whole time as he openly shared his struggle with me about her sexual expectations. It was kind of silly for us, but he definitely wanted the contact with me and wanted to please me while making sure he was also pleased with getting it on with his girlfriend. One of the best outcomes was that she had a good number of friends with whom M could relate and gradually he formed soft friendships with a number of them. This was great for M who before had been so isolated and fearful of forming relationships.

A BREAK... This just is coming out of no where except I read once there is no such thing as coincidence, but I just hit a button on the keyboard that erased the last hour and one-half of the work. It’s so frustrating. The first feeling is panic. I race to the back up. Not there. I then look for a miracle... maybe the computer saved the work that just evaporated, but if it did, I can’t find it. There must have been a reason for it to happen. Hmmmm. Let me close my eyes and get a feeling for this. OM...ding dong...I get it...even if it’s a rationalization for just BS it’s so I can experience the feeling of all the work that I’ve done just evaporating. What am I writing about if not that? That’s what it’s like for M and Z. No matter what they do, it just falls apart. Yet, people, mainly adults are telling them keep on trying. Keep on trying to do what they don’t know how to do.

“Trying.” What does that mean? I believe that trying is what we do when we have no intention or ability to do something. We say, “I’m trying.” But it never works out.

I had a conversation with M about this.

“M, let’s talk about why relationships are such a struggle to keep on going.”

“Yeah, I want to have a long term relationship, but it never holds together.”

“M, can it be the type of girls that you meet. I mean they are all pretty young. Fourteen year olds aren’t looking for long-term relationships. They’re looking for someone to tell them how fine they are, but they’re just kids. They are dressing to turn you on...their bodies have just begun to bloom. They are putting themselves out there with clothes and makeup and they do look good, but what do they know about life. They just want excitement.”

“That’s not true.”

“Isn’t it? Tell me about it then. I want to know.”

“The girls are just like anyone else. They have their ups and downs.”

“True. Yet it seems that although they want to be with you, that doesn’t last long

enough before they are looking for something more. It's true also for you. You know, when I read the emails you share with me (M has been sharing his emails with his current girlfriend and has asked me for feedback) reading your exchanges going back and forth it seems that you feel that she isn't giving you enough and that she feels that you are putting her down."

"Show me where I do that."

As we look at the latest email, "Here and here. She says something and you take exception with what she is saying."

"So, do I have to agree with her every time?"

"No, it's not like that."

"Look. I wrote this response to what she said and all she would say from then on out is, 'OK, if that's the way you feel.' Why can't she share her feelings like I do?"

"Well, she's a young girl, and maybe that's all she has. It seems that what you are expecting could only come from someone who was older and surer of her self. Fourteen year old girls are just that, fourteen."

"You mean when I disagree with her or try to make a point, all she's feeling is put down?"

"Yeah, that's what it means when she writes, 'OK, if that's the way you feel.'"

"You know what this mean don't you? I'm being just like my mom. That's what she does to me, always makes me feel bad about myself. I can't believe that she's got me doing that too. I can't stand her. I hate her. She needs to die."

After determining that M was just blowing steam and had no plan to knock his mother off, "Mother's are powerful in our lives, M. They do have a lot to do with the way we are and how we interact with others. Everything starts with moms; from the way they nurse us, change us, and play with us. Moms are our primary teacher of life. Being just seventeen and being "played" by your mom and not even knowing it, can come as quite a shock. It is a shock to realize that the way we treat others is the way we were raised. It's hard to believe it in ourselves because we hate it so much. It's tough to realize this."

"I need to get away from her."

"Getting away from her isn't easy."

"I need a job right away."

"Getting work is going to be a help."

"I've been leaving applications everywhere but no one ever calls me back."

"Getting an interview isn't easy. It takes skill."

"What do you mean skill?"

Well, some people get a call for an interview, and most don't. There must be something about their application that has more meaning than for those who don't get the call."

"I don't get it."

"Gee M. I wonder what is on someone's application that gets them an interview."

"Hmmm. What? You mean job experience."

"Yep."

"Well then I'll never get a job."

"It's true that you don't have job experience. So from my experience the next best bet is to get into a job-training program that prepares you for getting the job. Getting into a job-training program through your school's ROP (Regional Opportunity Program) that

certifies you takes about six months. With that certification the manager will see your determination and know that you have been professionally trained to perform the duties of the work. Your chance of getting an interview will go way up.”

“I need a job now, now six months from now.”

“Gee M. Getting a job with no previous experience and without training is very unlikely. But I know how important it is to get away from your mother. I wonder if there’s any other ways of getting out of the house without first getting a job?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, how about moving in with one of your aunts or uncles? Maybe move in with a friend.”

“I could get work right away as a male prostitute.”

“True, but I don’t know how that would allow me to continue working with you. A better choice would be to go do a small crime, but enough of a crime to get arrested and end up in Juvenile Hall. That way you could get out of your home today, get away from your mother, and have room and board and a bit of recreation. At least, you won’t have to be a prostitute. Seventeen year old boys who do that don’t last for too long...it gets ugly.”

“I was just kidding.”

“Oh. So was I about Juvie.”

“Hey, let’s go for a walk.”

That was something for me to hear. When I first met M his response to, “I wonder what types of activities we can do?” was “I don’t know. What do you like to do?”

“I like to take walks in nature, along a hiking trail in one of the regional parks or to walk along the beach.”

His reply to that was, “I don’t take walks. I hate to walk. I would never go for a walk. I hate to sweat. So just forget going for a walk with me.”

“OK, but that’s two of my favorite activities. Then I can take photos of what I see. That’s my major hobby besides playing music.”

So, when he said, “Let go for a walk” it was a monumental breakthrough. I had gotten him to take a walk many times before, but he always complained. The cool thing was once he got started he never complained. He’d walk with me and converse. That’s how we started to converse rather than for me to just listen to him talk. It all happened without trying while we walked. I found that when I took him to get something to eat he expected me to listen about his life. After he spoke for a good while about everything in his life...he even brought his journal to share, he would be open for me to “provide ten minutes of work that justified my being with him.” However, at no time was he open to interactive communication. However, on the walks it all just kind of fell into place.

“Hey M. Do you realize we just hung out and just talked together?”

“Did we? Does that please you.”?

“Hell yes. Yes it does.”

The next time we met he began immediately to tell me of how his mom was on the rampage again. He spoke again of how much he hated living with her and that it would be best should she just die.

“M this is the second time you’ve brought up how your life would be better should your mom die. This is making me nervous and also I am getting into a dilemma that I need your help sorting out. If I really believe that you want your mom to die I am

going to have to inform your therapist and he'll have to have you evaluated for intent. So, I need your help in making this decision."

"I'm just blowing off steam. I want her out of my life, but I would never hurt her. I wouldn't hurt anyone."

"Still, I would like you to consider other ways of coping with your stressful living situation, such as get into a job training program so that you can have some hope that there is a positive way that you can eventually get out of the house. I am going to speak with your therapist about him referring you to the clinic's pre-vocational workshops provided by TAY, Transitional Aged Youth program. The coordinator at TAY will start to work with you on preparing yourself for adult life."

"How long will that take?"

"I'm not sure, but like I said I have to talk with your therapist. He's the one that can make the referral."

Again, to repeat myself, once M's mom cut me off I had to inform my supervisor. The rule is that unless the parent participates in accepting offered interventions that are designed to improve relationships that our services have to be withdrawn. Because M's mom was adamant about not accepting any further involvement with me directly I was informed that I would have to start to transition to ending my relationship with M. So, while I was explaining TAY I had to remind him that now we'd have to stop meeting in about four to six weeks.

"What? You're going to abandon me?"

"I guess that's the way it feels, huh?"

"Well, what would you call it?"

"Graduation?"

"Yeah, right."

"Listen M. I have worked with you for nine months. You have come a long way from when I first met you and your mom. You know that I care about you and have done my best to offer you the opportunity to learn the skills in communication so that you can carry on normal social relationships. You understand now that even though you can't discipline yourself at seventeen you know the steps that are appropriate for forming a healthy long term relationship: Infatuation, acquaintance, friendship, and then intimacy. You know that when you jump from infatuation to intimacy and bypass acquaintance and friendship that the relationship is largely sexual without a firm foundation of like values and goals. Now you know the reason why your relationships with girls are all short lived. It isn't a mystery. One day you will develop sufficiently to want to discipline yourself so that you don't have to keep going through the cycle of disappointment in yourself and your girlfriends. It takes time. It's a developmental thing"

"Yeah, I guess."

"You also know that your mom has serious emotional problems that she is a slave to and given her life history she can't accept help that will assist her to manage her behavior. In the same way, you know that as a result of living with her as your major role model you have picked up many of the same traits that make it difficult to maintain relationships."

"What?"

"You know in how we explored your emails that you showed me and it demonstrated that you set your expectations higher than the girl can meet and thus you

built in frustration with her that led to criticism, thus causing her to withdraw and find someone else. Even though you initiated the high expectations and became critical you are feeling that she's dumped you. In reality she was just trying to get away from being put down by the person she felt she loved. You also know that your choice of girls are very young and that they cannot possibly possess the maturity and insight that you want."

"Oh, yeah, I remember now. I get it."

"M, you also know that you need to work hard to develop the ability to maintain your understanding and this will allow your understanding to dictate your goals, expectations and the steps that need to be achieved. The problem is that you need to hang around peers that support this effort to mature. I am hoping that you will meet some with TAY. The young adults that go to these workshops are a lot like you; just trying to figure out how to make it."

I took M to meet the TAY coordinator when the therapist decided to be supportive. It seemed to have a lot to do with the fact that I was going to have to stop spending time with M. He agreed to support the transition plan so when I brought M to meet the coordinator it went well. Before I had to stop M had already attended two TAY workshops. M wanted to know why I couldn't meet with him after I ended my professional relationship with him.

"M. That's a good question. Frankly I believe that you will continue to need someone like me in your life for many years to come. I also know that living with your mom is a terrible burden, but one that you are not ready to shed. There are adults in your life that do care about you, however you are still too afraid to allow them to be of much help."

"Like who? Who cares about me?"

"Well for one, your therapist. And two, your special education teacher. However from what you tell me they fail to provide you with what you need. Yet, I'm not sure that this is entirely true. I don't know your special education teacher, but I do know your therapist and he would do more for you should you provide him with the feeling that you need him and are motivated to learn. Basically allowing older people to help you and for you to put out the effort to practice what they share is what will give you the type of relationships that can move forward with you through life. My problem in continuing with you after I have to stop providing services is that I don't trust your mom to behave herself. You are seventeen, a minor. Even if I had her permission to meet with you, she could and probably would turn against me at some time and make accusations that even if I denied them, would be difficult for me to defend against. I'm not willing to jeopardize my job that provides for my family and allows me to help so many youth such as you. I hope that this makes sense."

"It does. Oh well."

"I'm going to miss you, but you can have me in your life to the degree that you continue to practice the skills that I have taught you."

I continued to meet with M for another month and then we had our last meeting. It was sad for both of us. He started to email me afterwards and I responded with "polite" responses...to support the change in our relationships. The last email I received from him suggested that when he turns eighteen we could go together to the Burning Man Festival out in the desert. The Festival is a wild event, with a great deal of extreme behavior. I wrote back to him that such a goal would not be acceptable to me in so much as I felt that

it was an unhealthy environment for myself and definitely for him. He didn't respond for a couple of months, but just yesterday, I got another email from him. OK, he's working to maintain a relationship even when he doesn't get what he wants. Sounds like he's making a few steps forward toward his maturity. That's very rewarding.

Toward the end of my time with M he shared the following essay. He received a poor grade on it and was upset. I read it and was amazed at how powerful it was. I shared that with him. I wanted to make him feel better and I was pissed that the teacher would give him a low grade for such an insightful essay. But, I didn't need to explain the teacher's mind set as I really had no idea why she assigned him a poor mark.

My essay is about kids with rich parents.

Now, when the parents are still kids, they most likely dream of making something of themselves. This could be a realistic idea only because they have the motivation to try and do it. They are probably thinking that the only way people will know them is to make money. Not true. If you take into mind:

Martin L. King Jr (you know him)

Agnese Gonxhe Bojaxhiu (the mother teresa)

Modandas Karamchand Gandhi (the Gandhi)

Siddhartha Gautama (the buddha man)

These figures in history made a name for themselves by helping others. The parents either choose not to go this route or completely forgot about it altogether. It doesn't matter which since we are not on that topic.

So the parents decide, after college, to go into the movie business. It takes some work but, eventually, land a small extra role in a block buster. They use the money they made to travel to bigger and better auditions. They become a well-known actor/actress. But one day they get sick of being onscreen and want to become a movie producer.

Years go by, and they make tons of money and happen to conceive a kid. This kid grows up in spoiled household where he gets anything and everything he wants. He becomes a high school kid with 69' stingray. Now this kid has a lot of friends only because he has money. He regularly spends money on them not because he's generous, but for the reason of being afraid that he will end up alone. The same thing goes on with his girlfriend; she stays with him to keep getting presents. Her birthday come around and he doesn't get her anything because he spends his time off-roading in the high desert. She calls him crying, and saying that he forgot her birthday; he doesn't care and shows that same feeling. She gets the hint and breaks up with him.

Obviously, there is something wrong with this situation.

I think we have established the problem. Our next step would be to fix it. There are multiple ways to approach this issue, one of which is going to be talking to the parents. In most situations, the school staff doesn't get involved with the home situations but when it has to do with a student's welfare, there are certain precautions that must be maintained. So the counselor calls the parents, after the kid comes into her office for some advice on his situation. She get a hold of his dad, they converse for a good while.

She makes sure he knows that this is a something he should take seriously. After they hang up, his dad makes a mental note to talk to his wife.

When the kid goes home that day, his dad takes him aside and explains to him that if he isn't going to treat people the way they deserve to be treated, then he is going to have to have allowance suspended. The kid is really angry, but he ends up getting into a better mood. The next day, he goes to school and doesn't have money. His "friends" end up leaving him alone with his emotions. The kid feels alone and forgotten when he realized that this must be how his ex-girlfriend felt that day. He uses his phone to call her and they meet up at lunch. He talks to her and she tells him how bad and depressed she felt. He empathizes with her and gives her a hug.

A couple of days go by, and the counselor has been checking with the kid. He seemed truly happy to the counselor and she ends up calling his dad after school. The dad thinks over what she had told him and decides to give back his allowance when the kid comes home. The kid comes home at 5:17. His dad is a little put off by the lateness, but the kid tells him that he was spending time with a girl. Put off, his dad tries to give him the allowance; at first the kid is a little hesitant about accepting it because he realizes how much he doesn't need it and can function without it. The dad insists and they come to an agreement of a reduced income. The kid goes to school the next day. Things go good, as usual.

A week goes by, and the counselor notices a significant difference in the kid's behavior. He is more content. The counselor talks to him after school and asks him what's different in his life. He tells her that he feels like a peer more than a superior. He said that not using as much money helps him relate better to his friends.

She says touché.

4. K

Many years ago I was working as a Rehabilitation Counselor in New York. Our clients were adults from many walks of life. All of them had gone through a disabling experience and were now being referred to our agency by the New York Department of Rehabilitation. My job was to assess and counsel my clients working toward the goal of placing them in one of many job-training programs that we operated.

I had completed my Master's Degree in Counseling from Teacher's College, Columbia University with an emphasis on rehabilitation. The reason I became involved with this program of study was my concern for disabled returned Vietnam Veterans and I was volunteering at the V.A. Hospital in NYC with the intent of using my background in art to assist the Vets. to have a creative outlet to express their trauma.

At the time, it was during the early 70's and the Vietnam War, I was living in married student housing with my wife who was getting her Master's Degree in student counseling at Teachers College, Columbia University. She and I had gotten back together after separating back in Berkeley. She went to get her degree and I went off to Spain to reconnect with a family of peers who had left the country due to certain reasons relating to the deterioration of America. They went to get away and I went after them to bring them back. Instead of going out of the country, I had been getting into the Native American thing and felt that rather than splitting the nation it was better to go Up Country and live with the Shoeshone and Rolling Thunder, a medicine man. Get back to the real roots of this country. Well the family wasn't into my trip and decided that they were really into their own thing and that I was welcome back in the fold, but they weren't going to live in a Teepee. Oh well. On my way back to Berkeley I stopped off in NYC and somehow hooked back up with my wife. Amazing, her name had just come up on the list for married student housing and bam, just like that we had a pad.

I got a job with the Post Office but had to blow out of there when I realized that it was run like the military because all the supervisors were ex-military people. That wasn't for me. I then was able to obtain a job working at the Teacher's College Library. One of the advantages of working for Columbia University was that they gave their employees a perk of seven free units a semester to take courses. I used my allocation of units to further my art. I took a number of courses, some just for studio space such as in the ceramic department, the sculpture department and the painting department. I also was interested in lithography courses and so I took a course in that. It was cool and I got along with the staff. When they saw the quality of my work, having taught myself, they were turned on and I was invited to become an MFA graduate student. Art had always been my gift, but I was in this conundrum. I was always having conflict that revolved around my disgruntled feeling about art in America and that to "make it" meant selling one's soul/art to the rich. I knew that relevant art of the people, you know social activist art wouldn't sell and that's what I was into.

What I found to my amazement was that at Teacher's College, most of the custodial staff were artists. I discovered this soon after I was hired as they had an art exhibit going on in the basement. Their work was powerful, rich, and socially relevant. They couldn't sell their work for more than beans, as the rich were definitely not

interested in this genre of Social Activist African-American Art. So here they were working as custodians. I felt connected to their reality as I too needed to have a socially relevant life style that could incorporate my art. Just to let you know I wasn't only a visual artist, but also a musician and was playing jazz, not with famous performers but with homeless musicians that were living in the local parks near where I and my wife had an apartment on 122nd. St. between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave., which is literally on the edge of Harlem.

Sometimes things are predetermined. Every morning, I mean early, I would go out into the park along the Hudson River to jog. One morning while running along a path this brother climbed out of a tree. For some reason I stopped.

“Hey brother man, what's up in the tree?”

“My home. Why?”

“Don't know. Just took me by surprise.”

“Returned from Nam...can't be around people...can't be around concrete...buildings feel like they are pressing in on me...trees are cool. It's quiet and I feel good feeling the breeze and the rustle of leaves...just me, the birds, and the squirrels.”

“Right on.”

About the same time as running into this brother, before going to work...I worked as the night supervisor of the library at Teacher's College, I was crashing, taking a nap, when I heard coming in through the window the sound of a trumpet playing sooo soulfully. Me, I'm into the flute. I get up, poke my head out the window trying to determine from where the music is coming...yep, my building, across the way. I grab my flute, go out into the hall, and walk to the door and knock. I wait. Knock again. I wait. Knock again and the door opens up to a very black, very skinny guy with a trumpet in his hand.

“Hey brother, heard you. Like to jam with you.”

Without saying anything he just turned around, leaving the door open so I skipped inside and followed him to the living room where he just put the ax to his lips and blew. Blew sounds that rocked my soul and raising my flute rode the sounds into the universe. Saint. That was his name. Vietnam veteran, living with his girlfriend who was also going to Teacher's College. That was it. I had landed. Saint introduced me to Larry, a tall, thin (so many of these brother were thiiiiin. Hey didn't they eat?) genius on the violin and we played. There was a piano over at Teacher's College and Saint also played keyboards and Larry playing and me playing. Yes.

OK, Vietnam, Vietnam Vets. Me, I was against the war and in Berkeley had protested, and still was. Doing drawings for the Anti-War movement at the college. That's the connection...Connection with Reality.

So I was volunteering with severely wounded Vets at the Veterans Hospital in Manhattan...not just talking about it, doing it. So, who cares about being right about Vietnam...people putting down the soldiers for killing women and children...true enough at times, but man, these were my brothers, my peers...who got drafted or enlisted because they didn't know better, and they were wounded and messed up and alone and that's where I could be doing something real. Still, as usual, I was hitting some boundaries with the staff at the Vet Hospital. They wanted me to engage the Vets. in crafts, which I definitely had no interest or skill. Instead I was encouraging them to paint,

draw, write poetry, and short stories about their lives and their experiences that led them to be wounded. So, surprise, surprise, I wasn't listening to this craft thing and so the head of the Vets. Rehabilitation Department finally in frustration with me, told me I had to stop the art.

“Going to wake up feelings and we aren't prepared to deal with that sort of shit, so cool it or split. Anyway who are you to come into our place and lay your trip down like this.”

“I'm with The People, that's who I am, mf. I've been sent here to let our brothers know that we are with them and that we need to hear from them in what ever manner they can reach out. So back off and keep out of my way. You mess with me and I'll have all these Vets. eating you for breakfast.”

Funny, some guys, the Vet Hospital is Federal Territory, so some guys with guns said, “Huh?” and there I was on the sidewalk...doors sealed to my thing. Damn. Is this shit for real? Still could have been taken out. Keep on truckin.

Soon after starting with the disabled vets, before I had been booted, I began checking out the courses offered by Columbia University that might relate to what I was doing and I discovered a course in rehabilitation counseling in the Department of Special Education at Teacher's College and I signed up.

That decision was part of what I feel is my guiding and guardian angel's work with me. I had never really heard of special education, but once I was in that course I realized that this is where I needed to attend, and wondered why it hadn't come to me before. I mean, a B.A. in Economics from the University of California at Berkeley...what did that mean as far as any of my expanding non-capitalistic values? I remember writing a paper on why it was essential to have a totalitarian government when a country's leadership decides it's time to get into developing. The focus and the concentration of resources. Then as the momentum gets up and going, an entrepreneurial influence is critical to keep it going and to get to the next level. Anyway the course was being taught by a Korean assistant professor who hated communism, and he dissed my paper giving me an F. So, I had to have a man to man chat with him after which he changed it to a C-. OK, good enough. Off you go my brother. Enjoy life for that's what it is. Anyway, that's when I realized that economics was just so much BS. No one really knows the truth, just the truth is what those in power say it is.

I didn't seek to get an MA, but once the professors in the Special Education Dept. got to know me and the type of goals I had; to use my art for social purposes they also invited me to get a degree just like they had in the Art Dept. at Columbia. I decided on the Special Education Program because it completely connected to my need to use my ability to see and hear as an artist in a socially relevant manner. While I was going through the MA program I started to work as the Assistant Director at Connection with Reality, a drug prevention and education program across from Columbia, on Amsterdam Ave. While working at Connection I started a cultural arts program and hooked up a Work Study Summer Program that used the arts as a foundation which brought in a large population of teenage students from the surrounding community. Then working with the Director, we turned the back room into a crash pad for the homeless musicians who would be the teachers for the Work Study Program. Now this was more like it and also this provided me with the opportunity to practice what I was learning in the Special Education program that promoted the philosophy that people are individuals each with

their own unique combination of learning strengths and weaknesses. OK, here I was among people who definitely were individuals. The word got out and after the daytime program shut down we opened Connection back up for a night of Jazz and jamming. Didn't get a lot of sleep and it really didn't promote marital harmony, but that's a different story. Oh yeah, it also didn't really promote drug abstinence which was the whole reason for Connection. But that's another story also.

Back in Berkeley I had been into alternative education and this combining with Special Education was a fit. The idea that each person is special benefits a teacher who by being aware of this can then have the possibility to tailor their educational program to their student's strengths. That's what Special Education is all about. Of course many children can learn in the general education program and progress satisfactorily. However, the statistics demonstrate that this is only true in economically middle and upper class schools. It definitely isn't true in impoverished communities. Positive personal relationships between the teacher and the students in poor neighborhoods is critical to maintain the motivation of the students who are directly experiencing along with poverty the terrible and terrifying violence and despair resulting in "unrecognized" Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a result the fear of attachment is deep as these kids never knows when someone they care about will be taken out.

The Special Education Program allows time for the teacher to get to know the student through the initial assessment period. With this personal information about the student's learning style, and getting an idea of the home and community life, the teacher is then able to individualize the curriculum incorporating strategies that compensate for the student's learning problems. This promotes success in learning, and the subsequent strengthening of the teacher/student relationship. The teacher isn't the enemy any longer; the person who demonstrates to the child how inadequate they are for that is the result of "normal" unsuccessful teaching environments. With success in learning comes, "Say, this teacher is different. This teacher delivers what they promise. I can trust this teacher."

When working with the kids in my current work, that's exactly what I do...I take the time to get to know them. I learn about their history, their family, and then I get an idea of how they process auditory and visual information and experiences. Got to know what they see and hear and how they process it to make sense of their reality. What is so difficult for most people to grasp is that each of us process our lives differently, like no two snow flakes are identical. It's therefore critical to develop a means of breaking down these differences for the people with whom we relate, to perceive the coding, so that we can adjust and modify our presence so that we can receive what these people have to offer us. It's kind of like having the right type of antenna to receive the signal. Most important in my skill in developing relationships is the ability to communicate that I value who my clients are and especially what they have to offer. After that's in place then of course, it's critical that I am sending a signal that can be received and processed.

I guess that the skills are enhanced by having the life experiences that allows for a feeling of safety and comfort when with people who are different in so many ways. My life has been full of very different kinds of people and this has helped a great deal when dealing with the complication of relating with people from different cultures. Culture may not be just ethnic, but can be culture of the same politics, the same religion, the same gender preference, the same feelings of alienation, etc. Packed into the cultural variable are boundaries that are designed to support the inherent uniqueness of that culture, so that

crossing cultural boundaries is difficult. For example, I can know something in my culture that is completely alien to another culture and vice versa. Complicating the drive to relate to people of other cultures is each culture's prime directive to distance itself from other cultures. It's like cells of the foot shouldn't go and hang out with cells from the mouth otherwise you can end up with foot and mouth disease...just kidding. Relating is just so very confusing. The numerous variables of relating with people of so many different backgrounds requires the life experiences that allows one to develop incredible flexibility and comfort. My life experience is fortunate and allows me to merge into people's lives without being threatening. Of course, that's now. It took years to even become aware of all this and to then make the changes to promote my goal of being of service to people of all backgrounds.

Back in the early 70's, working with kids from the Hood was about the most socially relevant population that I could have spent my time with. Working at Connection allowed me to practice what I learned and actually be able to check out whether Special Education was for real and relevant in the Adolescent War Zone that was so real for the kids I worked with. When I say the kids, I have to include myself, for I wasn't only checking out whether the special ed. thing was relevant to the kids, I was also working it out on myself. Can't know something any better than trying it out on me. It worked. Still, being the only White person at Connection and being the time of the revolution, things got a bit too intense and well eventually it became time for me to move on or get rubbed out. There were some bad people for real who don't take no shit and I didn't know my place...as usual at that time in my life...another White social worker type guy bites the dust messing with stuff that should have been left alone. Hey, being born in the Hood, having trauma from the get go doesn't easily lead to being an enlightened soul. It hurts, it crushes, it stomps and when that little kid grows up...not just a bit of anger...Big Anger. And there I was poking my finger into someone's repressed rage just looking for an outlet.

“Hey, I'm here to save you. Aren't I cool?”

“XXXXXXXXXXXXX OUT of Here.”

“OK...just let go and I'm gone.”

So when I graduated with an MA in Special Education Counseling I needed more money what with being married and having a new born son, and of course being saddled with student loans. One of my advisors referred me to an agency that had an opening for a rehabilitation counselor.

I had been working there for a number of months, and one morning I heard this terrible screaming and yelling coming from the room where our new clients were being evaluated for work skills and the necessary readiness attitude. The yelling increased and all the workers went over to see what was happening and in the middle of a circle of us stood this man in his early fifties, froth coming from his mouth as he screamed and yelled in a cacophony of sound. My supervisor attempted to calm him down, but finally the police had to be called in. As soon as they appeared the man became docile. He had been recently released from the state hospital for the chronically mentally ill and this was a time when the Courts had ordered the release of thousands of chronically mentally ill patients, kind of dumping them into the boroughs of New York. This client had been fortunate and had just completed a pre-vocational program and this led to his being placed in a halfway house in the community. Part of his program was to seek work and

that's how he was referred to us.

Being into jazz, in his tirade I actually began to understand what he was screeching or to my ears, scating about. What he was basically yelling was, "I want a job. I want to work." I asked my supervisor to assign him to me, which he was pleased to do. The man started to scream again the next day, and being my client I was the one to be called upon to deal with him. I had an inspiration and responded to him by yelling back at him at the top of my lungs, "I can hear you. You want a job. I'm the man that can get you work. How about coming into my office and let's get a plan together so you can get what you want?"

"You can get me a job?" he yelled back.

At a near hysterical pitch, "Yes, but you have to demonstrate to me that you are ready to go to work and to accept supervision. That's part of getting work."

"You say you want to help me, then why are you yelling at me?" he said in a suddenly calm voice.

"Am I yelling? I thought we were just singing a duet together. Come on let's go to my office and get to know each other."

Two months later he was employed as a courier riding the subways carrying packages. I guess the point of this is that it's important to listen to people for what they want in life, and once this is discovered, goals can be set and motivation is at its highest.

Having related this pre-story, probably exhaustively, let me introduce. I was assigned to work with K he and his family were living in a motel; having lost their home to foreclosures. Hey, a real life victim of the financial meltdown with no bailout available.

K, his ten year-old sister, his mother and father were sharing a room, the boys sleeping in one bed, and the girls sleeping in the other bed. The situation in the motel room was obviously extremely crowded with the mother using the bed as her office, having set up her computer on a bed tray. The father had his computer set up on a typing table next to his bed. The TV was set up on the bureau and there were constant conflicts over the choice of programs. Because of their limited resources they cooked their meals on a hot plate warming up canned foods. Cleaning dishes was done in the bathroom. It definitely didn't help that the only private space for K was to go out to the lobby unsupervised or into the bathroom where he would take two hour long baths and according to his mother, doing what ever to entertain himself.

The family possessions were in storage and taking most of their meager money keeping the stuff there. The parents were eternally optimistic; sure that their fortune would turn around and they would be back in fat city. The father fortunately worked for the motel chain and was getting the room for free. The mother had retired from AT&T a number of years before because of the heavy demands made in the care of K. K was fifteen and was afflicted with Asperger's, which is a form of autism. His behavior was verbally and physically aggressive when he became frustrated. He was attending a special non-public school that worked with kids like him. About twenty-four students, only two girls; this ratio really was upsetting to K.

The mother was more dominant and she was the one who shared with me the examples of K's aggression. She related that when in the car if he couldn't listen to his favorite station on the car radio he would tantrum and even grab the steering wheel as a threat to her in order to get his way. For that reason his mother put him in the back seat until he had reached around the headrest and began to choke her when she wouldn't turn

to the Disney Station. The Disney Station was where he could listen to Miley Cyrus/Hannah Montana...his dream girl.

Most days after school and being driven back to the motel by his teacher's aide, he would spend the afternoon in the lobby working on his computer; supposedly developing programs. His mannerisms were unusual when compared with most kids. While sitting or walking he would keep up a constant conversation with himself or sing to himself. When walking his gait was somewhat ungainly with his limbs kind of taking unusual routes, a bit like a one year-old when they are mastering walking and running. In the motel his unusual behavior was a source of amusement and made him a target for teasing by the motel staff. This would easily cause him to feel being ridiculed and this triggered his yelling at them for disrespecting him and if they didn't apologize immediately it could escalate into him breaking up furniture in the lobby.

I first met him during a provider meeting (When all the professionals and the parents get together to discuss what to do with the kid) with him in attendance held in the conference room at the motel. I was surprised that he was able to keep seated and was polite during the hour-long meeting. After the meeting I arranged to meet with him at the motel for our first one-to-one session after he got back from school the next day. Also I arranged to meet with the parents before meeting with K.

I arrived at the motel on time and knocked on their door. I had to knock a few times before the mom came to the door.

"Oh, you. You're here? I don't remember we are meeting today."

"Hmm. Well at the provider meeting yesterday, before I left we made the appointment for me to come to speak with you and your husband before I meet with K later."

"We did?"

"Yeah."

"So why are we meeting? I have a lot of work to do for school. I'm taking an on-line degree in design."

"Well, before I start with K it's helpful for me to get some insight into what's going on from the parents. I'm hoping you can tell me about your experiences with K and what you hope to gain from my being involved."

"OK, but my husband won't be back for a while. He went to pick up our daughter at school."

"While we wait why don't we go into the lobby and we can begin."

"Fine, let me get dressed and I'll meet you in a few minutes."

I wandered into the lobby and off to the side was an area with a number of tables and chairs used by the patrons for breakfast as it was provided free. It was comfortable enough and I picked a corner where we might have some degree of privacy. While I was waiting for her, the father and K's sister came through the door. I got up and greeted the father as the daughter ignored me and went into her room. The father joined me and we sat down.

"I'm glad to have some time to meet with you. Your wife was a bit surprised that I'm here. She didn't remember that we made the appointment yesterday."

"Don't let that bother you. She's like that all the time."

"I was hoping to get some feeling about how things are going. It helps me to get to know the family."

“Sure. We’ve been living at the motel for six months. Fortunately I’m close to the manager and he’s allowed us to stay here. He has a daughter with problems so he understands what I’m going through with K. It’s amazing how well we are getting along for having to share such tight quarters. We all have our own little space. I’m very proud of the way we’ve set up the room. Basically my bed is my office, and my wife’s bed is her office. The kids have the corner with the TV and the video games.”

K’s mom joined us and she jumped right in, kind of ignoring her husband and what he was telling me.

“K is terrible. He’s driving all of us crazy. You got to do something with him. We can’t keep on going like this. Nothing we do or anyone else does helps. He frightens me. He’s big. You saw him. I’m afraid he’s going to hurt me. He always has to get his way, and what can we do now? He’s so unpredictable. I tried taking away his computer when he misbehaves but it just gets worse if I do. If we weren’t living in a motel, a public place, I would never let him get away with what he can by living here. Before we started to get help from the County my husband would deal with him, he has a Black Belt. But once the County got involved, well we don’t want to deal with Child Abuse charges. So this kind of leaves us paralyzed in regards to controlling his behavior.”

Her husband tried a number of times to have some input, but each time she spoke over him. Finally she excused herself and I was able to spend a few minutes with him alone.

“I’ve got a really good relationship with K. We can sit and talk. You know I have a degree in psychology. The thing though about K is that after we talk, he doesn’t seem to be able to remember anything. He just goes right back to the way he was before. I point this out to him and he apologizes, but he can’t seem to retain anything. I explain to him how his behavior is going to get us kicked out of here. I explain to him that he needs to speak politely to the staff. I explain to him that we don’t have enough money to move out. I explain to him that we will have to take away his computer and his I Pod when he doesn’t remember, but you know what? He doesn’t care. He just doesn’t care and then the punishment has no affect on him. It just doesn’t work to lay consequences on him.”

“It sounds like you are doing everything you know how to do and so is your wife and yet it isn’t working out. Look, living in a motel isn’t helping because there’s just not enough space for anyone. Because of his Asperger’s in addition to his having emotional problems the situation must be overwhelming. I’m not an expert in helping families that live in a single motel room. Still, I have some experience working with disabled kids and their families, so let’s see what I can do after I get to know K and your whole family.”

At this point K, back from school, walked into the lobby and immediately sat down at a desk close to the entrance. He pulled his laptop out of his backpack and began to do something.

“Let’s go over to him. I feel bad that he didn’t come over and greet you.”

“That’s OK. Let me just sit here and check him out for a while. I just want to see what he does. Why don’t you go on about your business, and I’ll just kind of work myself into greeting him when I feel it’s the right moment. I’ll probably come back to the room with him for a while to see how he interacts. Before I leave we’ll set up our next meeting.”

“That’s a good plan. I’ll see you shortly then.”

I sat for a good while. K just kept focused on what he was doing. After another little while I got up and began to wander around the lobby to get into a position where my

motion might catch his attention. It didn't. Not even when I stood directly next to him. Finally I spoke to him.

"Hey, I'm kind of interested in computers, but I don't really know much about them except for basic word processing."

He looked up at me, and then smiled. His smile is one of those that lights up the sky, and these are matched by his eyes which are like two full moons reflecting the light of his smile.

"Hi."

"Hi back at you. You got a minute. I spent some time with your parents, and now it's our turn."

He got up after guardedly powering down his computer. "Are you taking me out?"

"Going out together is a good idea, but probably not today. It's just the first time together and I would like to get to know you a bit before I take you into my car. So how about grabbing some juice and a bagel that I see over there on the counter?"

"Great idea. Let's get some juice and a bagel."

He got a bagel and a cup of juice and then we sat down. "I was so impressed with how you just fit in with the adults at the provider meeting yesterday. You handled the situation really well."

"Yes, I am well behaved when I'm with all those adults. It's the best way to be. They get so uptight when I get fidgety. It's best to just sit still. I can do that because in my mind I'm working out programming problems that I'm facing with my computer. While they talk about me I problem solve. It's great. They think I'm well behaved, but I'm not entirely there, just my body. Talking about me sucks, like I can do anything about what my life is like."

"Man, you amaze me."

"I'm a genius you know. I can see things that other people can't."

"It's got to be some experience being so much more aware of what's happening than everyone around you. I'd be interested in hearing about it."

"I'm really into computer programming. You will find this interesting. I'm working on a new OS (Operating System) to make computing so much easier and a great deal quicker."

"You know K I don't know much about programming except that's what computers run, but I'm interested. I'm hoping that you will be willing to be my teacher and I'm a good student. But let's save it for when we have enough time together, and for now, why don't you show me around."

He picked up his computer, went to the room and left it and then he became a tour guide. He took me to the second floor, showed me the two ways to get there, then he took me to the laundry and showed me the washers and dryers, and then to a small weight room. He was very cordial and seemed very pleased with himself.

When we went back to the room so I could check it out with everyone in it, yep, there was the mom laying back on her bed with her laptop on the bed tray, the father was sitting on the side of his bed with piles of papers around him.

"I've got a number of lawsuits going on about the foreclosure. I got a lawsuit also against the school district. We weren't always poor, and it seems when you're poor you are treated poorly. Ha ha. Funny, right?"

“Wow, you’ve really got this room organized.”

The mother picked her head upon hearing this, “Yeah, we’re experts at motel living. Everything we need is right here. Seems funny to once having lived in a three thousand sq. ft. home with all the amenities. Life is life. Got to go with what’s happening.”

“Yeah, like in the real old days when people lived in a one room cabin. It’s amazing how little we really need, but still, a bit more room would be helpful.”

“We’re looking for a place. We need a three bedroom, two bath at a minimum. Just got to get a job, but whose going to hire someone even part time when I need a flexible schedule. Never know when I’ll get a call from the school to come and get K.”

“That is a challenge. Still, I’m sure that the team is working with agencies that help people get low cost housing and maybe it’ll all come together while I’m working with your family.”

I met with K and his parents a few more times at the motel before I began to feel confident enough in my relationship with K to take him in my car and into the community. While I had been meeting with the parents I was in contact with his ten year-old sister who seemed to be uptight about me being involved. K had a youth partner working with him for many months before I began, however once I started, the youth partner was reassigned to another client and had to stop seeing K. As it turned out the sister was very attached to the youth partner who used to spend time with K and her playing card games. Life for the sister who was “normal” and understandably quite upset having to live in a motel and not being able to relate to her friends after school, valued sharing the time with the youth partner. So, when she found out that he would have to stop because I was beginning...well it was easy to understand her attitude. I kept it light with her even though she was often rude to me during the beginning months. My focus had to be on K and his parents and it was a shame that the sister’s apparent normalcy prevented her from having the same attention as her brother. As a result she was quit isolated once back from school.

In one of our first conversations K let me know that before he was into computers he had been into Biology and Botany...compulsive like. Great, I love nature.

“So K, I’m really into nature also. Know of any parks nearby?” He did. By the way the motel was on the eastern fringe of the county near two regional and one National Parks.

“Before we get into my car there’s a couple of things about traveling together I feel that we have to talk about. First I like music and I’ve heard that you do too.”

“Let me tell you. I’m into Miley Cyrus, alias Hannah Montana. I mean really into her.” Ha ha. Big grin. “She’s on the Disney radio station. It’s really important that I listen to her when I can.”

“OK, well I’ve heard of her but I’ve never listened to her music.”

“She’s the daughter of Billy Ray Cyrus, the famous country and western singer. She has an album with him on it with her.”

“Great. Well, I’m sure that you’ll educate me. So when we get into the car for the first period of time, I’ll let you choose which radio station we listen to. But, after a while I want some time also. How’s that?”

“Good idea.”

When the mom told me about K attacking her and the driver that took him and

brought him back to school over what radio station was being played...no contest. Why set it up for conflict when it was so easy to let him have his way over such a minor issue as the music. The only boundary I set in the beginning was the loudness of the music.

“So, given that you get to choose the music we listen to I want you to know that I have the choice of how loud it’s going to be played. My ears are very sensitive, so I just want you to know that the level will be set not too loud. Plus while driving it’s for our safety that I be able to hear any sirens that may be blasting.”

“Good idea.”

“Gee K, I feel that spending time with you will be good for me. I hope that it’s also good for you. So before we go to the park, let’s go get something to eat. But I want you to know that my budget for you is \$4.00 each time we go. So where should that be?”

“Taco Bell.”

The boy was into tacos. I like taking the kids to get something to eat each time I’m with them because it mellows out everything. They eat, get something to drink and we just hang for a while. I know that I’ve shared this before that nurturing and respect are two of the mainstays to my style of delivery. It is incredible how powerful those two factors are in encouraging a healthy working relationship with the kids in general and especially for the kind of kids I work with.

“Here, you hold the money”

“Good idea.”

“You got a wallet?”

“No, I’ll just hold it in my hand.”

K had trouble getting out of the car while holding onto his money.

“You know, carrying money in your hand in public isn’t a good idea. First of all have you ever seen anyone else but a little child carrying money in their hand?”

“You’re right. I’ll put it into my pocket.” With him putting the money into his pocket I turned and led the way into Taco Bell. When we got to the counter the money was still in his hand. OK, no big deal. There were no other customers in Taco Bell at the time.

“Go ahead and order when you’re ready. Remember, the total has to be no more than what?”

“Oh yeah, \$4.00.”

It works out well with their dollar menu. In fact a number of the items were less than a dollar, however their small soft drinks cost more than their food. Still he managed to stay close to the \$4.00 and that was good.

After he made his order and we got our food we sat down in the far corner, to keep our conversation private in case anyone else came in. It was when we sat down that a bit of his thing began to show. Instead of sitting on his butt like everyone else he sat on his knees. OK, knees work, I guess but at his age? While sitting on his knees his body was turned away from me at a sixty-degree angle keeping his head diverted from straight forward contact. While he spoke to me he made only momentary but rapid and repeated eye contact. He also had what he called a habit, but was really a tic; a severe twisting down of his head and then looping back up. It occurred every ten or fifteen seconds. When I asked him about it he related that it was just a way of loosening up his neck. Another oddity was the volume of his voice. It was too loud. He spoke as someone does who has a mild hearing problem. He didn’t have a hearing problem, but that’s how he

spoke. It was a little uncomfortable to not only have him talk endlessly with no breaks, but to also have to listen to it at a volume that was a bit too loud.

While he ate his two tacos he had no awareness that lots of the meat, cheese and lettuce was falling out of the bottom and onto his lap.

“Hey, you’re losing it. Here, use the tray to catch it so that you can eat it later.”

“Good idea.”

“So, K, the food here is good huh?”

“I like to eat here. The dollar menu fits your budget and I don’t really like hamburgers.”

While he speaks he stutters especially when he’s into a topic that he really likes. It’s not a traditional stutter like, “St, str, str, str, strai, strai, straight.” It’s more like sentence stuttering, “I, I, I, I, I, I...you, you, you, you know what’s really interesting? Miley Cyrus is kind, kind of, kind of, of my girlfriend. I, I, I, I, mean I, I, I, I know, I know all of her songs. She’s, I mean, I mean, she’s...you know what’s interesting? She’s only a bit older than I am. I’m going, going, going to be, be, be, a, a big rock star. I, I want you to know, I want you to know that I make up my, my, my own songs. When she hears them she’ll, she’ll want, she’ll want, she’ll want to meet me and then she’s going to be mine.” The whole paragraph ascends in pitch and sound levels, and when he finally completes what he’s trying to say, he’s very excited and laughs...then he looks quickly to see my reaction.

I provide him with good visual responses through my facial expressions and exclamations of amazement and interest. He at this point doesn’t allow for much conversational interchange. When he is encouraged to speak of his thoughts, ideas, and theories on the subject of computer programming he will speak at length as long as I keep focused. The longer he speaks the more animated he becomes until he is so overwhelmed with his subject that he can’t continue to sit while he speaks and gets up and roams this way and that while he continues to discourse on the subject.

“Do you understand?”

“A little, but I’m interested.” I take notes to provide a visual demonstration of my interest.

“See, I’m taking notes so that even though I don’t understand everything you are telling me, I can follow up with you later.”

He can easily speak non-stop for an hour on his interests, but then I often redirect him because I’m fearful that his voice box will fall out of his mouth from overuse. He speaks of very fascinating aspects of programming and with the right cues he will digress to explain the terms and concepts. One time he spent an hour describing the new “Windows 7 - Beta” I learned that Beta means a trial form of Windows 7 that was put out by Microsoft during its last stage of development to allow users to play with it and to provide feedback about any bugs.

As soon as I picked him up each time to the moment I brought him back to the motel he would keep up a constant monologue in regards to all his work on computer programs. As usual, any time that I tried to have some input he kind of just talked over the top of me. (A bit like what his mother does with his father.)

Life is amazing in what it provides. My daughter’s longtime boyfriend has a Ph.D. in computer sciences from M.I.T. They were spending the summer locally and I asked him if he would be willing to meet with K and give me some feedback as to K’s

actual knowledge and accuracy of what he was telling me about. To me, he seemed to be as he said a genius. However I also observed that while he was a seemingly inexhaustible encyclopedia of computer knowledge K never actually showed me an application of that knowledge. My daughter's boyfriend was willing and so to keep K feeling safe and secure I set up a meeting at a fast food location.

K was a bit bashful even though I had prepared him for this meeting. By taking notes during the two months of my time with K I was able to come up with a two-page list of subjects that K had touched upon, and this became a guide for their conversation:

Topics for Discussion

Computer: Acer Netbook, 8 gig, flash drive, SSD-Solid State Drive

RAM: Volatile Memory: Forgetful, Temporary Memory

Processors use it to store the Temporary Memory

Non-Volatile Memory – ROM, Permanent Memory, Hard Drive

File System

Operating System

Disc.

Current Research:

Improving Processing Sequences

Allows computers to program themselves

Light Waves: Big Bang – Space Jet/Warp Drive.

Photons: Light Waves

Energy: Building blocks of light waves

Photons are building blocks of Matter

Compression of Space, sucks in space and propels itself outward through use of Accelerator Space Craft

Program:

Intake Processors

Index: Journal of links to whole file system. Each block linked

Inode: finds the block where its at and dumps it into memory

Bio-Computer

File System Journal: Records errors in this and fixes the necessary block.

Config. Code: similar to text syntax. Open Source Config.

Linux: Closest Text to Code.

Parallel and multi-level

Windows 7 - Beta

MP3 Corruption, Hot fix, erases first few lines.

Build computer

HP Memristor

A. Arrange 17 memristors in a row: Theoretical in 1970

Memristors: Resistors that slide along and stay in position when powered off. A processor that remembers. Instant Presentation of programs that were running when turned back on and simultaneously self-correct.

Dentries: Nano sized memoristors

3 nanometers slide up and down vs. total of 15 for HP

Multi-core

File System Link Database, Software & Config. Files make up core of operating system

Journal type links to every inode of file system

Kernel: Copy of Linux Kernel OS. Drivers that allow OS to run, see the code, and figure out stuff on top of it.

Virtual Folders: Windows Explorer and Library the Same.

Home Group Networking at home, File sharing Feature
Encrypt Bio Matrix
Network IP Switch
Peer to Peer: Receiver transmitter wireless, No Hotspot Required. (Hotspot: Wi-Fi Router
Create server that has capability for multiple inputs. Linux Server comprises of millions of
computers. 32 Terabytes of Ram, 100,000 processors.

To make things easier on them I suggested that they just go down the list. With each topic K was encouraged to pursue the subject matter to the full extent of his knowledge. I was surprised to see that there were limits to his understanding of topics that became apparent as they conversed. After an hour K began to lag and there were actually increasing breaks in the monologue. The boyfriend was very careful to pull back at each such moment, and soon K was just eating his food. I encouraged K to practice his social skills by thanking my daughter's boyfriend, which he did and that ended the "interview."

Later I spoke with the boyfriend to receive feedback as to the actual level of K's knowledge. I was told that K had the expertise of anyone of his age who was taking a serious interest in the subject. So, no, he wasn't a hidden computer genius. Also, it seemed that K was reciting his information from his photographic memory and that wasn't the same as actually being able to apply the knowledge. What was clear was that he would benefit from taking a course in computer programming at school. The only problem was that his special school didn't offer this option and his behavior at school was still unacceptable and this precluded him from enrolling in a course at the local high school. Still, K's interest in taking such a course could be a lever to assist me when I began the work of teaching K how to improve his social skills.

The problem for kids with Asperger's is the overwhelming challenge to acquire coping and social skills that will allow them to mainstream. K was far short in his acquisition of these skills, but I felt that he had the potential should I be able to move our relationship to that level. Right now, I was just assessing the breadth of his ability to function. We did kind of reach a personal boundary in his interview with my daughter's boyfriend. Something happened to K at the conclusion when he had come to his limit of knowledge. With me, there were no limits for him. He could keep on speaking about his stuff forever and I wouldn't be able to perceive his boundaries. With my daughter's boyfriend, that boundary had been arrived at with catastrophic results, at least for K, as after that meeting, he wasn't able or open to going back into his computer bag. The next time we got together he just kind of sat there without anything to say, even when I gave him some leads that normally would have turned him on.

Rather than confront him on this, like, "Come on K, you can't just turn off because you weren't at the level of a Ph.D. in computer science. For a kid of fifteen you're doing great. You just need the opportunity to put your knowledge into practice in a class with peers, etc." No, I didn't go to the "Let me convince you..." I just let it be, part of wanting to assess and to discover where this would lead us. Part of me also felt kind of guilty to have inadvertently shut him off. I just let it be and kept on visiting him twice a week until I found another avenue.

Another amazing aspect of hanging out with K is that it's impossible for me to get lost while driving with him as he seemed to know every major street and how and where its name changes as it moves across various cities.

“How did you learn all of these roads?”

“I read maps and I have a photographic memory.”

“Wow, no kidding. That’s a gift.”

“I’m very smart. Everything I read I store in my mind. You can ask me anything and all I have to do is look into my mind and read the answer. That’s why I’m so good with languages...it’s easy for me.”

“What about auditory memory? Do you remember everything that’s said?”

“Yes, I do that also.”

“You will find this very interesting. I also have photographic memory, but it works differently than yours does. Like when I go somewhere as long as I’m the one driving the next time I have to go I can see the route in my mind. But, if someone else drove, I don’t really know where I am until I get to the destination. However it didn’t work that way when studying. It was frustrating because afterwards I could see the page and the paragraph that the answer or information was on, but when I tried to read it, it was blurry. My father had the type of photographic memory like you do. He could study a new language and just download it into his brain. What a gift.”

“Yeah, you want to know something. My Spanish teacher is amazed how fast I am learning. The vocabulary is easy and so is the grammar because when I need it I just pull it out of my memory.”

“It sounds like your memory is kind of like the hard drive in a computer. Just pull up the vocabulary program and there it is...Spanish.”

“I like that idea, my mind like a computer.”

I was kind of holding my breath, because this was the start of our being able to converse.

“You are very interested in computer programming which uses computer languages. I am very interested in languages, not so much as to learn them, but rather to understand how language affects human relationships. You know how you told me that you are not satisfied with the operating systems that you have to use because they inhibit your creativity and theoretical thoughts. You also don’t like the fact that the computer language dictates by its design how you can proceed. Because of this I remember you telling me that you want to make up your own O.S., well I too am unsatisfied with the language that I have to use, but in relationships. It’s my theory that English is well designed for technological communication and problem solving, but when used between people to communicate feelings, it fails and ultimately it undermines human relationships. Because of this I’ve been working on a new formulation of English that enhances rather than breaks down relationships.

You and I can be helpful to each other. You can open my mind to the science of computers, and if you will allow me, I can help you open up your mind to how it can function more completely using the computer imagery that you are familiar with to help you see where the source of the breakdowns emanate in your relationships with peers and adults. What do you say?”

“OK. You are trying to help me in a way that I can understand. You are the first person who can do that. Thanks.”

“You know, computer languages seem to have some of the same function as human language. I’d be interested in your ideas about this. I find human language full of bugs just like you find bugs in computer programs. Imagine writing a program with a

computer language that has bugs. All you get is a bunch of holes, or lots of misunderstandings. But why don't you just think about this and get a feeling for it. We've been talking a long time and now we need to do something more physical. Are there any parks around here where we can take a hike? I remember you telling me how much you like botany. I'd sure like to learn the names of the plants in this area. What do you say?"

"There's a regional park just a short distance from here. Let's go there."

"You're kidding, so close? Great. Don't forget to bus your tray."

"Good idea."

We left Taco Bell and went to the car. K was behind me and when we got into the car there he was with his Taco Bell tray on his lap."

This is too cute. "Hey, there's a tray on your lap. Are we going to take it with us?"

He looked a bit bewildered and laughed. "You're right, I know what to do. I'll return it."

Well he was correct. The park entrance was just a block away, off to the corner of a shopping center. There were no signs on the street and it was one of those magical places right on the edge of "civilization."

"Oh, we have to pay." There was a meter machine to buy a parking ticket. I gave the three dollars to K who was more than able to feed the money into the machine. Having paid, put on sunscreen and grabbing my hat we walked down the path to the trailhead.

I was so pleased that in our previous visits that K was open to taking short walks in local city parks. Like I said earlier he was nearly full grown with a strong body and seeming good endurance. Once we left the parking area and entered the regional park trail it all shifted from city manicured to naturally wild. There had been a major fire the previous year that burned much of the area, but the trail wandered through a canyon that escaped a good part of the fire, and the brush had come back in the areas that had burned.

The trail meandered along an intermittent stream. I was amazed that in some section the streambed was completely dry and then walking around the bend there was a flow of water that supported a variety of wildlife. Well the section we were walking along came to a footbridge and all of a sudden K started screeching in a high wailing voice, "Bees. Run." That was exactly what he did. There were bees along the edge of the water, drinking I guess, and the very sight of them set him into a panic. He ran back down the trail about fifty yards before I caught up to him. His eyes were wide, he was breathing hard and had broken out into a sweat.

"K, man, bees?"

"We got to get out of here. There are bees. Please, let's go."

"OK, let's take a breath. I need to rest a minute."

"Those are probably African bees. They'll get us if we don't leave."

"Really, I didn't know that there are Africanized bees in this area. I know that there have been some found in the desert, but not around here. I'm pretty sure that they're just honey bees. They won't hurt us. But we can go if you need to leave. I love nature, and I'm confident that nothing will hurt us while you are with me. But, this is just our first hike, so it's no big deal for us to leave. Maybe we can figure out a way to make our next walk feel more safe."

"Let's go now."

“Sure.”

This phobia about bees took me by surprise as he had spoken so highly of his knowledge of botany. I had assumed that he was comfortable in nature, but it turned out that all of his knowledge came from a class he took at school and his photographic memory allow him to just download information from books and the internet.

“Gee, K, that kind of took me by surprise. We both seemed to be looking forward to the hike. I wonder, something must have happened between bees and you. I’d be interested in hearing about it.”

Evidently he had been stung once as a child, and that was all it took. Bees put him into a panic ever since. Two positive things came from this experience. K discovered that I was there for him, and not just for me. I didn’t encourage or “strong arm” him into walking past the bees. I respected his phobia and this supported his need to know that there was safety in our relationship. The other outcome was that it provided me with a concrete manifestation of his insecurity and self-doubt. With each client I look for a lever that will allow them to overcome the hurdles that block their development. Really what I am attempting to communicate is the means for them to understand and to develop the skills for overcoming obstacles that operate on a subconscious level and which blocks their development. Their relationship with me opens up that possibility and assuring that the relationship is safe and secure is the key to their taking a chance with me in attendance.

Talking about bees is one thing, being confronted with a bee phobia when bees are present, well, that’s another thing and the type of thing that helps me do my work.

The next time I was out with K we went to the same Taco Bell that became our “office” where we did our work. When K stopped speaking about computers as a result of having hit some kind of boundary in his conversation with my daughter’s boyfriend, I was delighted to discover that by being patient with him he internally processed what that meant to him. Somehow that processing opened a door to the possibility of a more socially appropriate communication in which two people could converse about an idea. The days of the lectures were over.

“You know, I was really pleased with how we dealt with the anxiety about the bees. I used to be the type of person that would immediately kind of want to “force” you through that experience and kind of pull you past those bees. I’m glad that I’ve grown and no longer do things like that.”

“I would have not cooperated. I’m too big and strong to be made to do anything without a fight.”

“Exactly. I’m glad too. Still we need to brainstorm how we can deal with the challenge of getting past the bees. I don’t like to think that the very presence of bees can keep us from crossing that footbridge. I wonder how we’re going to work together to do this?”

“I really won’t go near them because you can’t tell if they’re Africanized Bees or not.”

“You’re a smart guy, into science, right? Let’s conduct an experiment. This trail is constantly used by mountain bikers. There have been no reports of bee attacks on the trail. We’d have seen a warning posted at the trailhead. Let’s walk up to near the footbridge and wait for a mountain biker. If he gets across without being attacked, then we’ll by observing the passive nature of the bees, know that it is safe for us to cross.”

“Good idea. But maybe they won’t attack someone on a bike but they will if you’re on foot.”

“It’s possible. Then after the mountain biker passes over the bridge, I’ll walk across and if I’m not attacked, I’ll cross back and then walk with you across the bridge. I hope that sounds like a good plan.”

“Good idea.”

“Still there is one more idea that we can implement to help you. I want to teach you a very short but powerful saying that I will want you to repeat out loud when we see the bees. Ready? Here it is, ‘Bees, Bees, Bees everywhere, but no Bees on me.’ Ok, now your turn.” He repeated it and said he would use it when I reminded him to.

That’s what we did and that’s how it turned out. Well, I walked back across the bridge with K, who busted by me at full speed yelling out, ‘Bees, Bees, Bees everywhere, but no Bees on me,’ and ran up the trail a good ways before he stopped and I could catch up.

“I’m so proud of you. That was manly thing to do. You have a lot of courage.”

“No I don’t. I was terrified.”

“Hmmm, well I once was impressed while reading something in which it was stated, ‘Courage is being able to do something that is frightening.’ That’s what you did. You did it even though you were frightened. That makes you courageous.”

“I’m still afraid of them.”

“That’s OK, but I wonder if that fear won’t diminish the more we successfully pass bees without being endangered.

For the next two months we took walks up that trail twice a week. Rather helpful was the fact that there were numerous swarms of bees up in the Sycamore trees, for it gave us lot’s of practice passing bees.

I became a role model. I’m very comfortable with bees and I decided to provide K with visual evidence on the safety of bees. I always carry a camera and I love nature photography, especially close-up photos. It was spring time and so the flowers were in bloom and guess who hangs out on flowers? Bees. So I’d take my camera and slowly and calmly approach the bees on the flowers and take the photo. In the beginning K would be calling out to be careful, but eventually he calmed down. It was the same for passing the bee swarms that were making hives. In the first month or so he would dash past, but I’d just kind of hang out looking at the bees coming and going. After the second month while conversing about this or that while we were walking K would walk by the sound of bees doing their thing without even noticing them.

This development became the cornerstone of his being willing and able to take on other challenges such as those challenges in his personal life in relating with his family and peers. But before getting into that there was one more physical challenge that he would overcome.

It is important to remember that K was disabled with Asperger’s and that this is an aspect of autism. During one conversation about literature he related that he can’t stand fiction. He liked books on facts. Science over fantasy, and definitely it was upsetting for him to even know that there was a genre called Science Fiction. This really bothered him. I wondered why. I mean I wondered why neurologically and how it affected his ability to process his surroundings. What I mean is easily demonstrated as follows.

During one of our hikes, and we had now extended our hikes from a few hundred yards to four and five mile roundtrip hikes, I went off the trail to look at some flowers. This entirely freaked him out.

“Come back. Come back.”

“Hey, I’ll be right back. I’m only standing over here. It’s only twenty feet from you.”

“Come back now, right now.”

I was surprised that walking such a short distance off the trail, being in full sight was so upsetting to him, but it was.

“Ok, I’ll come back in a couple of minutes. I got to get this photo first. Why don’t you come over here and check out what I’m doing.

“No, I’ll just stand here, but come back quick as soon as you’re done.”

I never responded to K’s demands with any sense of urgency. The reason for this was that I wanted to demonstrate that one can deal with a problem in a calm and thoughtful manner. I also didn’t want to support his emotional intensity, and I wanted to be in control over our interaction, but still respectful to his challenges. I did wonder why he was so up tight about me stepping off the trail until I connected his dislike of fantasy and fiction to the insight that while science is predictable, fiction and fantasy creates a sense of “You don’t know what’s real.” The trail was his anchor. To K, the trail was definable. It had a beginning and an end and a certain width. It was recognizable and it satisfied his need to feel secure because as long as you returned along the trail it would take you back to the starting point. In our case we started walking only a hundred yards, and over the months we extended the hike a great deal, but we always came back to the starting point along the same trail. It was known and knowable. However, when I took even one step off the trail for K it was a threat because what wasn’t part of the trail was undefined; anything off the trail wasn’t definable, it represented the unknown.

That’s kind of what the word “Nature” means; not civilized...not defined. That’s what science attempts to do with nature. Make it knowable, labeled, categorized, knowable...controllable. For K, there is no visual boundary to “off the trail.” Off the trail goes in so many directions without any structure. For K, his aspect of Asperger’s included the necessity of knowing where he is at all times. Thus, his complete knowledge of every road, its origin, where it changes its name as it crosses city lines, and the eventual end point. Knowing where he is within the environment was crucial to K’s sense of security; and also an extreme limitation.

This is deep. Anything that wasn’t predictable was a threat to him. Not knowing what the bees will do, that they were unpredictable and also because they had stingers, well that was a prevalent threat. Once I helped him learn about the patterns of these bees, there was order and he could cope. So too going off the trail. Guess what? Going off the trail gave me the second concrete lever to work with to support K’s development. Going off the trail opened up the opportunity for him to progress in an expanded sphere of learning. Parts of the unknown can be become known and with the right support, (that being me) there is a safe way to get to know more about it...but at the same time it doesn’t have to be like what science does with it...try to predict it so that it can be controlled.

As we continued to make taking a hike a ritual part of our time together, K one day turned to me and said, “Let’s go that way. We haven’t been that way yet.” Wow, into

the unknown. Fantastic. So off we went, and within a few months we had taken new pathways and found previously untraveled trails. Soon it was hard to get him to turn back when we had to given the time restraints. Toward the end of our time together we were taking three to four hour hikes. The unknown in nature paralleled the unknown parts of K's brain. It was in the yet to be explored environment of his brain that once it was accessed would provide K with the potential of undeveloped brain matter that could be organized and used to provide him with the missing social context and structure that defines Asperger's.

The point of this is that his overcoming the obstacles of the unknown and the bees changed his whole attitude toward life. Much of his previous aggressive behavior had to do with him trying to keep order and predictability in his life. He had to be the judge, jury and executioner for those that "violated" his sense of order. That's all he had working for him to keep himself together. When people violated his sense of fairness, which required everyone to view the world as he did, it frightened him, challenged his sense of reality, and led to triggering his aggression; an attempt to reassert his primacy.

It's difficult to understand that K didn't experience the world in a "normal" manner. It's difficult to comprehend the effort he had to make to fit into any part of the "normal" world. In part his tantrums were like an epileptic fit. Connecting to the "normal" world was such a strain on his nervous system, that at times he would just overload and need to release. Most of the time he released the nervous energy by being hyper-active and manic...suddenly jumping up, running around, and laughing. Other times that type of release was inhibited by the structure he was in and then by the time he got home, he'd just let go at the slightest provocation. All this was a mystery to everyone. "His outbursts are so unpredictable." Not true to me, but certainly it's understandable why it would be true for everyone else. No one else had the intuitive ability and the time to really get into K's head. I got it and I did my best to share it.

With his empowering experiences on the hike, having come to terms with the bees and finding himself excited about the freedom of taking untraveled trails, he now knew that he had courage and the physical strength to take on the other challenges. He discovered that he wasn't weak, and that his fear of social relationships which had a real source, did not need to continue to withhold him and incapacitate him. Yes, as a result of his history with people he had every right to be fearful of engaging with humans, however now he acknowledged that while he had the fear he also had the courage to approach the challenge and that there was a good chance with my support he could achieve social interactive abilities.

"So, are we now ready to learn how to relate to humans? We've done a great job with nature. I want you to know that the same skills that we developed interacting with nature can be transferred to interacting with people."

During these months I had made no progress with the parents. It wasn't until they found a townhouse to move into with the financial support of one of the County programs that a door to improvement opened up. This coincided with the point that K and I came to in being ready to approach the challenge of human relationships. In my opinion there is nothing easy about the world of human relationships. One isn't only dealing with the obvious elements of human social interaction, but one also has to deal with the subconscious, the hidden and mysterious underbrain that is impacted by everyone's own and individual traumatic experiences that clouds the conscious mind and surrounds it

with fear. It's so hard to be aware that when we interact with someone we are also interacting with their subconscious mind which seems to have an agenda of its own. What's more, one is also challenged by habit. It's not just about one's own change, but also how to introduce change so that people who are used to us being a certain way will be open to the person we are working so hard to become. Still it is my skill as a guide to lead K from the known (Where his life is so limited and full of impotence) onto trails that lead into the unknown and to have these wonderful experiences and then in a role reversal to follow him as he skillfully makes his way back to the known society in a way that demonstrates all that he has learned on this journey. So off we go.

At home things were deteriorating even after they moved into the town home. I was meeting with the mother, and infrequently with the father because he was working two jobs. Mom was struggling with the suggestion that nothing could change in K until she actually role modeled change by being willing to learn and then to apply the interventions that I know work. From all that you have read so far, this is not unusual with the adults of the families with whom I work.

I had asked her to back off from confronting K about his chores and his homework. As I do with each of the families I work, I encourage them to agree to a truce on those issues that trigger aggressive behavior. Like everyone else, this sounds like a capitulation of power to the kid. Maybe it is, but it's essential to reduce the tension that is destroying the family's harmony. The bottom line choice is to continue to engage with highly emotionally charged incidents that endanger the kid and the family or to step back. To step back takes courage, but courage for what? What are the adults fearing that demands that they be brave? To them it's about maintaining a sense of control, and with control comes their sense of integrity. They actually believe that they are good people so what they are doing must also be the right thing to do. To them it's the right thing to do, to set boundaries and structure. They completely are under the influence of the cultural imperatives that their kids are supposed to be doing as they are told. "We'd be remiss as parents if we didn't get you to do your homework and chores." But is this true?

No. It's not True, rather it is a point of view and one which is supported by our "misguided" culture that believes that we as Americans are the one's that should be in control of the world for isn't America the best place in the world?" Or something like that. Well, at times, this is valid, like during World War I and World War II. Sometimes you got to just stand up and kick ass. However, when we look at the world since then, that model of kick ass doesn't seem to be working out too well. So, what else can we expect from parents who are the adults of this "I'm in the right, always, even when I'm wrong" culture?

So, it's all just not working right. Everyone knows it, but it's too overwhelming to deal with. As there is a subconscious mind in individuals, there is also a subconscious mind for any culture that influences the "conscious" decisions made by its citizens. Yes, it gives the parents the right and power to control their families, but does it first teach them how to do it with skill so the goal of parenting can be arrived at in a harmonious and safe manner? Just to provide an example of the mess let's consider that we live in a democracy. Well, do we really? The "truth" is in the answer to the following three questions:

1. Is there democracy in the family?
2. Is there democracy at school?

3. Is there democracy at work?

Well? The answer is “no” to all three questions. So if there is no democracy in the family, or at school, or at work, then how can we be living in a democracy?

In order to have a democracy certain skills have to be learned and practiced. One would have to practice democracy first in the family, then at school and then at work in order for there to be a cultural democracy. The right to vote is only one small part of a democracy. Without the knowledge and the skill to be democratic there can be no democracy in life. Now is that fair? We speak the words but don’t live it. I wonder what conflict this causes within the family, within school, and at work? My experience says a great deal of repressed resentment. I guess part of being an adult is “learning” to be “mature” and not make a big deal out of this problem. “Grow up,” means accept this without questioning it and to be obedient even when it’s something that needs to be improved if not corrected. Well, how do kids deal with this? Many go along with their parents. Other’s can’t manage to do that and they act out or withdraw and in both cases the cultural response is to label those kids as emotionally disturbed; Oppositional Defiant or Depressed. In this way the culture marginalizes, censors, and deflates the “defiance in the face of tyranny.”

I guess the lesson is learned best by looking at the American public’s response in the face of the betrayal by the Supreme Court by setting aside the recount in Florida thus eviscerating democracy and in brushing aside the principals of a democratic vote, placed George in the position of President. Even when it became known that the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, George’s brother managed to remove about 75,000 black voters on the undocumented basis that they were supposed to be criminals and therefore not qualified to vote. Later when this was researched not one of them had a criminal record. Still, not a whimper from the public. The second step was the acceptance of the American public of the blatant lies about Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction that justified the war. Yes, the outcome of no democracy in the home, at school or at work is “No Democracy.”

Unfortunately there is no requirement for parents to have a degree in parenting before they procreate. Here. Do it, and the hospital doesn’t check out the parent’s for sanity or skills. Out they go with a child, no questions asked, and without handing out a Parenting Manual. Now does this make sense? And guess what? That’s what I say to the parents, and this at times opens up a small doorway into their internal programming. The challenge is to be subtle in presenting a new and additional view of parenting without triggering a deep seated cultural response that would deny its integrity.

I had gone on vacation for a couple of weeks, so when I returned to work as usual before I go to pick up K, I called his mom to confirm the appointment. On this day when I asked her how things were going she told me that K was in juvenile hall.

“K strangled me. I can’t handle him anymore. I didn’t want to put him in juvenile hall, but he’s just getting worse.”

“Please help me understand what happened.”

“He always loses things and then he comes to me and expects me to jump up from what I’m doing and help him. Well, I was working on a project for my design course, and I told him that I couldn’t help him. He got upset. He couldn’t find a certain part of his computer that he needs me to help him to install. So he started yelling at me, but I wasn’t going to give in. Then I went downstairs to get away from him and he followed me. I told

him that I wasn't going to help him at all unless he started to behave. He grabbed me and I pushed him away, and ran back upstairs. He ripped my blouse off as I made it into the bathroom and locked the door. I had grabbed my cell phone and he heard me calling the police. He broke the door and grabbed me and started choking me. I broke free and ran back downstairs and outside. A neighbor came over, with me standing there in the street in my bra. When the police came K ran back upstairs to hide in his room. The police were able to talk to him and convince him that they just wanted to talk with him. My God, what am I supposed to do?"

"What a terrifying experience. I'm glad that you're safe. So when did this all take place?"

"Right after you left for vacation."

"So how long will he be in The Hall?"

"Four weeks."

"Listen, I'd still like to meet with you and your husband so that we can continue to work on what you as parents can do. I'm not allowed to visit him while he's in The Hall. The time remaining for him to be there will give us some time to make some positive changes so when he gets back things can be better."

She agreed to this and I met with her and at times also with K's dad.

"Let's take the time and review the incident that led up to your decision to swear out a warrant on K."

"It was a hard decision. We didn't want to do it, but what else can we do? He choked me. We spoke to his psychiatrist and he advised us to do it, to have him arrested."

"Now let me kind of guide this. I was wondering about what led up to the conflict and I am interested what was the intended outcome that you hoped for when you resisted K demand that you help him find and install the part to his computer."

"Nothing happened before; he just came to me making his demands like he always does. He never listens and I'm tired of appeasing him by responding to him when he speaks that way to me. He needs to think of me also."

"That's so true. Getting K to be aware of other people's feelings and needs is exactly the core of his experiencing his autistic type features. Every parent of all the autistic spectrum kids dream of that day."

"You know it's hard to remember that he is suffering from Asperger's. Still I've got to keep my sanity. We can't just be his slave and give in to him every time he gets upset. We need to stay in control."

"I guess I'm just looking at the outcome of the strategy that was used to achieve the goal of keeping in control and not to be at K's beck-and-call. Ending up being choked and with K in The Hall was the outcome, so let's try to look at how things went that way. It's clear that K has poor coping skills when he doesn't get what he needs. I am working on that with him. It's kind of predictable that he will tantrum when he is frustrated in having his needs met at the pace that will satisfy him. So let's look at the moment when it went wrong. K comes to you with what you feel is a reasonable request, however his need for you to respond immediately is unacceptable. Is that about right?"

"Yeah sure, it's not like I wasn't going to help him; it was just the immediacy of his demand that was upsetting to me. I told him that I would help him later when I had time, but when I said no to his demand he just started to freak out."

"So, it was just the spontaneity of the demand given what you were working on

that brought the negative response to his demand.”

“That’s right.”

“It seems that there is a lack of a mechanism that is available for K when he feels that has to have a need met that also takes into account the schedule of the person who has to provide that service. I guess, that is one of the interventions that I was suggesting. That K’s needs can be organized and scheduled so that this kind of conflict can’t arise. K needs to begin to understand that his needs can be met, but not without some planning. It is my experience that kids with Asperger’s do better with a highly organized and structured home environment. Keeping a wall calendar is very helpful so that needs that take time to be met such as installing a component into his computer can be scheduled.”

“We’ve tried that before. It doesn’t work.”

“I wonder why?”

“He just keeps coming to me regardless.”

“Hmmm. Things that don’t work are frustrating. Still I’m not sure of the context that that strategy failed, but I’m wondering if it wasn’t some years ago that it was tried. The thing is that K is now older and perhaps developmentally more able to respond to that approach. Why don’t we experiment, and try again.”

“OK, what else?”

“Let’s just stick to bringing into play one intervention at a time so that we can keep focused and it will be easier to evaluate the results. It’s critical that you and your husband keep in mind that by strictly keeping to the utilization of the intervention that it opens the opportunity for you to achieve a different outcome that more closely approaches your intent to have a more harmonious relationship.”

K was in the Hall for the four weeks. Upon his return home I was able to start meeting with him again.

“You are very intelligent and insightful. It’s a pleasure for me to be able to work with you. I am concerned that the kind of trouble you’re getting into has a lot to do with not seeing the situation from the other person’s point of view. Having an opinion is good. Everyone needs to be able to assert. In addition, though it is important to acknowledge that our viewpoint is just one of many. It’s not only about getting what we need, but to accept that sometimes our viewpoint while relevant to us, may not take into account larger factors that are also important to our welfare.

“I don’t understand.”

“Allow me to provide an example. Say you want to go to the liquor store which is not too far from home in order to buy some candy. It’s night and your mother says no. Can you imagine a reason why she might take that point of view?”

“Well she always treats me as though I can’t take care of myself. So I guess she fears for my safety. But that’s ridiculous. I’m big and know how to fight. My father is a black belt and he showed me how to take care of myself.”

“Very good. So your father who is physically capable of taking care of himself, and also being the parent that taught you self-defense skills would feel confident to give you permission. However, it’s easy to predict that your mother lacking the same skills as she herself doesn’t know how to take care of herself in this way and is fearful of physical threats would not be confident to give you the same permission. That’s called projection. Your father being confident projects that onto you and so gives you permission. Your mother lacking self defense skills and lacking in physical confidence projects that feeling

on you, and won't give you permission. So naturally from her point of view it wouldn't necessarily be safe for you to go. She may not be right, but in her mind, given her responsibility to keep you safe and given her own insecurity, her rejection of your desire to go to the liquor store is understandable. Once you can pick up on where she is coming from, her decision is predictable. Instead of getting uptight about this, it would just make sense to learn how to understand people so you can anticipate their objections to what you want to do before you approach them. Doing this allows you to develop a good argument for doing what you seek to do and one that also takes into account the initial anticipated objection to your request. K, it's a social program that would benefit you should you chose to download it into yourself.

Overall, being able to understand other people's points of view is important so that one can have a more balanced way of understanding one's own situation. This is a very important lesson in life. I'd like to help you develop this insight into a part of your lifestyle."

"Good idea."

"I'm pleased that you feel that way. What I find very helpful is to have some way of slowing myself down when I get uptight. I know, for me if I give freedom to my frustration the outcome will be more upsetting than the reason why I originally became upset. Let's take a look at how you ended up in the Juvenile Hall."

"Well, I messed up, when I choked my mom."

"So tell me what your intent was when you did that."

"I was angry at her and she wouldn't listen to me. I started out speaking to her nicely, but she wouldn't respond. So I had to get loud. She still wouldn't help me. Then she tried to get away from me, and so I just followed her so that she would know that I was serious about what I needed from her. Then when I caught up with her she pushed me away and to keep her from running away again I grabbed onto her. I wasn't trying to choke her, just hold her from getting away. When she slipped out of the hold she ran again and to hold her I grabbed her blouse. It just tore off. She ran upstairs and I followed and then she locked herself into the bathroom. I guess I was out of control by then and when I busted the door she ran outside and that's when I suddenly realized that things had gone too far. The police came and well, it wasn't good. I know better now."

"OK. Thanks for telling me how things went. Still I am wondering about the outcome. Certainly your intent was not to be chasing your mom around the house with the outcome of your being arrested. Tell me what was your intent when you went to ask you mom for help."

"To get her help."

"So the intent was to get her help. How did that turn out? I mean if you were developing a computer program for getting help and in this example it was to get help from your mom, well what would your evaluation be of the program that you developed?"

"Not so good."

"That's honest. So the program did not help you achieve her help, so I guess there would be no point in using that approach again."

"You're right."

"Basically, given your experience in writing computer programs the next step in this process would be to accept the failure of the program to help you achieve your goal,

and to sit back down and modify the original program or if you think it's necessary, then write another program that hopefully would be more successful. So what we are dealing with here is the need to write a better program. You know, people programs are just thoughts that are written into our dialogues. So what we need to work on is developing a dialogue that will help you achieve your goal of getting your mom's help."

"Good thinking."

"Let's look at the sequence. Correct me when I'm wrong. You needed your mom's help to find and then install a computer component. You got up from your desk and went to her room to ask her for help. Tell me what happened then?"

"I asked her nicely and she refused."

"I wonder what the context of this was. I mean you were trying to do something and couldn't without her help. I wonder what she was doing?"

"She was doing school work on the Internet."

"I know when I'm totally focused on my work and I get interrupted I can be a bit gruff before I catch myself. So I wonder if your mom wasn't kind of in the same frame of mind. What I'm asking you to do K is to ponder about where she was at when you came to her for her help. I'm also wondering how much you know about Asperger's?"

"I know a lot."

"What I know about this problem is that people with it have a difficult time with social relationships because somehow their brain's program for social interaction isn't hooked up right. It's in there, but the neuronets that attach it to conscious thought and action are misfiring so that the messages never get through. Being aware of other's people feelings is a challenge for kids with Asperger's. I wonder if that isn't what is happening between you and your mom. You have Asperger's and she keeps forgetting about that."

"You're right."

"Well if your mom keeps forgetting, I wonder if you don't also; keep forgetting, that is. I guess the program for social interaction between you and others needs to have built into it that component; the consideration of the affect that Asperger's has on social interaction. Some how you and your mom need to remind each other of the meaning and affect that Asperger's has before you try to communicate. Otherwise the outcome will keep repeating. Doesn't this make sense?"

"Yes it does. Speaking with you is so easy for me. I wonder if I will ever be able to do this with my family and peers at school?"

"I'm not sure, but because I always remember that Asperger's has certain affects on relationships, it makes it easier for us. Maybe as you learn to remember this you will be able to help people with whom you relate to learn what you need to make communication easier."

"We have a lot of work to do, don't we?"

"It's fun K. It's even more fun than computers, because it's about us, you know, taking on a challenge with lots of obstacles that with our teamwork can be successfully overcome. There's a lot of satisfaction in good teamwork that brings an idea into real life. What could be more fun? We are on the path of creating a social program that works and helps people get along."

During this whole time K and I were still taking the twice a week hikes into the extensive Regional Park. One day K said that there was another entrance to the park and

that he wanted to try that. Man, this was great. Not only different trails from the first entrance, now he wanted a whole new set of trails from the second entrance. Progress in confidence and self-esteem. This was physical stuff; in this physical endeavor he was for the first time in his life, experiencing getting what he wanted in a good way.

Hiking became the core of physical competence that initiated the link to and lead to a similar outcome in interpersonal relationships. It's about having this type of positive experience, of achieving a goal that was previously blocked by an overwhelming obstacle. Having the physical accomplishment supports the effort to then successfully revisit developmental stages that were skipped or not successfully achieved in childhood. Through our relationship K was catching up on missed developmental stages and achieving the skills required for a further progression. Our relationship demonstrated that his problems with people wasn't anyone's fault; not his or anyone else. The problem was just the outcome of the difficulty of everyone to comprehend the implications of Asperger's on each other. The special element in my relationship with K was that through it he was able to have a relationship with me. It wasn't just me having one with him, but it was reciprocal. This connection made it safe for him to attach to me in a healthy manner and allowed me to demonstrate to him how meaningful he was to me. This ability to connect in a reasonable manner is the foundation upon which K was able to expand into other relationships in a good way. This expanding foundation was critical for the effort that K was undertaking and it was a pleasure for me to be so fortunate to have a client that was demonstrating the ability to respond to this goal.

No more fear of bees. No more fear of going off the safe path. He learned that because I was safe to be with and I was assisting his progress toward manhood and competency such that he might be able to find other people to interact with in a similar manner. After all, isn't this what life is about when you're a kid? So there I was hiking with K and having these amazing conversations and then there still was the work with his parents.

The parents were still not fully committing to the program and hadn't yet put up the calendar to help schedule time with K. They were also struggling with the concept of the Truce and stepping back from making demands that historically have led to conflict. This was a problem. It's often a real struggle to obtain not just the agreement of the parent to an intervention but there is also a struggle in their taking the necessary steps to apply the intervention when required. The key to the program is for the family members to acquire the skill of listening to each other and not to jump to conclusions until that insight has been gained. This reminds me of another situation in which the intervention of listening to each party's viewpoint before forming a conclusion failed to materialize, resulting in triggering aggressive behavior in K.

K was having a series of difficult times with his mom. She was into laying consequences on him to "assist" him to behave. This didn't really make sense because both the mom and the dad had told me repeatedly that neither positive nor negative consequences had any affect on him. What I learned quickly was that the most important goal K had was to get a girlfriend. His biggest complaint about going to the special non-public school was that out of twenty or so students, only two were girls. This really pissed him off and was his excuse for much of his poor attitude. He figured that because no one would respond to the fact that he felt that it was unfair that only two girls were at that school that it made perfect sense to him to punish the teacher and administration by

misbehaving. Anyway, the only chance he felt that he would ever hook up with a girl was at the weekly church youth group that he attended. Going there was obviously very important to him.

Mom reported that on the way to the church youth group she had to stop for gas. She had his sister in the car with him and while she pumped gas the two siblings had a problem. When she got back into the car, his sister reported to his mom that K had been swearing at her. In response to this report the mom related that she decided that enough was enough and she would have K pay the consequence by telling him that as a result of his behavior toward his sister that she wouldn't be taking him to the youth group, instead she intended to return home. Hearing this she reported that K became initially verbally and then physically aggressive with her. As she left the gas station she pulled into the left lane to do a U turn. Upon leaving the gas station K at first plead with her to allow him to go to the youth group. While she waited for the light to turn green she told him that she wasn't going to change her mind. In response to this negation of his hope he reached out and grabbed the steering wheel to prevent her from turning around. She pulled his hands off the steering wheel and started the car forward and in response to this K opened the car door pushing it fully open so that it came into the neighboring lane where traffic was proceeding. She related that somehow she eventually she got him calmed down enough start to go home. However on the way, at a stop light he jumped out of the car and ran away. It wasn't that far from home, so he was able to get safely back.

When I saw K the next time while getting something to eat at Taco Bell, I inquired about his viewpoint. I never approach these types of subjects directly. We talked about this and that before he kind of brought up the incident. He related the following.

"On the way to the church youth group my mother needed gas. On the way there my sister was able to listen to the radio station she wanted. So when we stopped for gas it was my turn. She started to call me names when I went to turn the radio station. She said bad things about me and so I told her that she wasn't being fair and when she called me more names I just told her to "F off." So, when our mom got back into the car she told on me. I tried to tell my mom about what my sister was saying but she wouldn't listen."

"Oh, there was something that triggered you to swear at her. Tell me K, I'm interested in the triggers that set you off. Can you help me?"

K thought about it for a minute then related, "Well, she told on me."

"Yes, she did, but I wonder how it felt when she did that."

"I guess that it pissed me off."

"Sure. I'm sorry. I'm not making myself clear. I'm wondering why you didn't go after your sister, but instead went after your mom. After all, it was your sister that was telling only her part. It sounded like the moment of the incident really turned when your mother wasn't willing to hear your part of the story."

"Well, it's not fair. She always listens and believes my sister. It's not fair. My sister lies a lot and my mother always takes her side."

"So when things aren't fair that is a real trigger that flips you out."

"You're right."

"I wonder what else triggers aggression. I remember you getting really angry when the motel staff was teasing you and I heard that you ended up breaking up some furniture. I wonder what about that situation kicked you into high gear?"

"You know, I hate it when people ridicule me. I didn't take it. I went right at

them. People should know by now not to mess with me. I can hurt them.”

“I’m glad to hear that you know how to be strong and protect yourself. I seem to be hearing that another trigger for aggression is when you feel people are not respecting you, but instead ridiculing you.”

“That’s right. Don’t ridicule me. Don’t treat me unfairly. No problems.”

“Ok, so we now know two triggers that set you off. I wonder if your mom knows about this. Maybe I’ll let her know. Maybe we can both let her know.”

“Good idea.”

By listening to his point of view I experienced some discrepancies from the story his mother related. There are always differences in the points of views as apparently no two people ever see a common experience the same way. At the next meeting with mom and dad I had K sit in and this is how it happened.

“Remember the rule of listening to each other’s story or point of view is that there is no interrupting the other person. Even if you disagree with what they are saying or how they interpreted an experience, we must agree to allow the other person to complete their recitation. Then it will be your turn. When you have fully related your impression of the events, then I will see if I can guide a reconciliation of the various differences. Is this agreeable?” It was.

“So, mom please tell me again how the incident happened.” She did.

“Now I would like you to hear about the incident from K as he experienced it.” He did.

“You can see from what you just heard that the incident did take place in which K swore at his sister, and yet it wasn’t an isolated moment, but a moment in context as to what happened just prior to his swearing. Did you know that K has two major triggers? He can’t stand being ridiculed and he can’t stand being treated unfairly. In this case his sister was ridiculing him by making belittling comments, and he felt he was being treated unfairly when only he was to be blamed and the only one to experience a consequence. These two feelings, being ridiculed and being treated unfairly triggered the outcome which was aggression.”

For some reason this experience of actually hearing her son communicate and the effort I made to analyze the incident from a series of antecedents, things that happened before the outburst, changed her view of the situation. Happily this led to his mother reevaluating the vast effort that K was making to improve his life. Being a good person she wanted to immediately call in K’s sister. I asked her to wait a while, but she wouldn’t. In her “interrogation” of the sister she discovered K’s perspective was accurate. This led to immediate remorse for she saw how unfairly she had treated and had been treating K. This led her to admit that she sided with his sister because she couldn’t cope with all the problems that his sister was having and that it would be too overwhelming to have two kids with emotional challenges. This was a big breakthrough and K was privy to this, seeing his mother’s “human” side and hearing her feelings of desperation and anxiety.

I do want to say that having subjects to cover with K and his parents planned out in advance is a good idea, but it is important to leave the intuitive element in place to guide how this is accomplished. I did know that I wanted to introduce “other perspectives” into my work with this family, and I trusted my ability to intuit how to best achieve this. I must admit, the outcome was better than most times I have taken this

approach. It's all about being flexible enough to do the right thing at the right time. It's always good to do the right thing, but it's not always the right time. It helps to be aware of this and to keep on swinging. K by hearing his mother and for his mom to hear him, changed a great deal in my work with the family. She actually began to emulate this approach by moderating her initial urge to discipline, and instead taking her time to hear from the different viewpoints including her own before deciding on an approach to a problem.

K's dad claimed to be an innocent bystander during all the times he was in attendance, and took the position of speaking little if at all. This wasn't going to work, so I finally got him to commit to a one-to-one meeting with me. He was working two jobs, and even three for a short period of time. This left him sleep deprived, and often during the meetings with him in attendance, he would fall asleep part way through. In this meeting I arrived shortly after he returned home from the night shift and just after the kids went off to school.

"I'm glad that we can have a little time to ourselves this morning."

"Me too. I just want to say how much I appreciate the work that you have accomplished with K. You've taught him how to have a conversation and since that he and I have been having a much more productive time when we speak."

"Thank you for acknowledging that. I too am pleased with the progress that K has made in being able to carry on a conversation. I know how much it means to him to be able to converse successfully. I guess that I'm concerned about his ability to transfer this to his peers and hopefully to his teachers. Of course, the more that we can encourage this type of interchange at home the better it will be for everyone. I'm also pleased with how much progress you wife is making. She's starting to use the interventions and not being so hasty to make judgments. This seems to be very helpful to her and to K."

"Yes, I've noticed that she is more patient, and I wish she would use that same approach with me."

"Husband and wife relationships are as tough as parent and children relationships. You know, eventually I am going to have to stop meeting with your family. I am concerned that we determine who can carry the "torch" when I'm gone. I am hoping that you can take that role."

"You know that I wish I could spend more time with K, but with my work schedule...there's very little time."

"I'm aware of this challenge, so I guess I'm looking for us to come up with some time period when you are here. It doesn't necessarily require a lot of time, but it is important that it be mostly daily. I was wondering about what time you get home in the morning."

"Around 7:00 a.m."

"Tell me what is occurring when you get home."

"Chaos. The kids are fighting and my wife is yelling at them trying to get them ready for school. It's hell after an all night shift to come home to this. I often think about not coming home after work, but wait until the fighting is over and the kids are off to school."

"Man, I can understand. You must be totally exhausted. It sounds like you would like that if things could be different that it would be great to come home to some good feelings with your wife and the kids greeting you and maybe all of you having a nice

breakfast together?”

“That would be heavenly.”

“So there is a window of about an hour or so when you get home that it might be possible to have positive family time together. That would be my work, to encourage your wife and the kids to express some degree of appreciation for your effort to keep the family in house, food, and clothing. The key is to find something concrete such as a pleasant breakfast time as a focus to use as the lever to get change to take place. I will work with your wife and the kids on this. Hopefully once I couch the goal within this framework they will seek to please you. This will allow them to work cooperatively in the morning so that when you arrive home you can all sit down to a wonderful family breakfast and then off to school for the kids, and off to bed for you.

“That would be wonderful.”

“It’s a real challenge having a disabled child. Having to work, plus all of the household duties, and going through the frustrations in life, plus the loss of home to foreclosure, then having to have us mental health professionals looking over your shoulders all the time, well it can be a lot to go through.

“You are right. I know I’m a good man. I am doing all that I know how to do to take care of my family. Keeping a good attitude is also so important. I hope that I’ve done that through these tough times.”

“There is certainly nothing fair about life. It’s only by comparing it to how bad I know it can be, that I feel like I’m also doing my best. Being a man in our culture can be very challenging. In the old days, it was about bringing home a deer, a turkey or two, a mess of fish, plowing the field, and taking in the harvest. Everyone in the family participated. It wasn’t a secret. ‘We cooperate as a family or we starve.’ Things were much clearer then. We gave it up so that our kids could play video games, text each other, and walk around blocking out the rest of reality with I Pod earplugs stuck into their ears. We, as adults went along with this and agreed to it by buying the video games, the cell phones and the I Pods. Can’t blame anyone but ourselves. Still, we as adults have to cope with making judgments on these technological situations that neither we nor any previous generation had to deal with. Not only are we the first parents to deal with these technological advancements, any effort we make to educate ourselves still falls far short of what our children can and will do with them. It’s so difficult to help our children to learn how to moderate their use of these tools when we don’t really understand them ourselves. To be frank, our kids are running circles around us. Somehow in the process we turned the power of family life over to children and by surrendering our power and our knowledge of life and common sense we now live under their rule with no common sense or life experience in sight. It’s for us to figure this all out, even though we are not educated sufficiently. I guess that’s why you have someone like me here. It’s up to us to reconnect with reality and provide some baseline of that reality for our children while we at the same time live under the burden of our own and our society’s ignorance. It’s kind of like the days before doctors accepted how important it was to wash their hands before seeing the next patient. In reality enough medical practionners still fail to do that leading to some terrible infections in hospital settings. Anyway, we have to accept our ignorance and do our best to educate ourselves.”

“You should be teaching at the University.”

“Thank you. You know, it’s my experience that there is very little purpose in

teaching when there is so little chance that what one teaches can be put into practice. That's why I chose not to pursue that avenue, and why I chose to teach the practice or application of what I know directly with the families with whom I work. This type of work allows me to spend sufficient amount of direct contact with the family to assist the process of implementing the interventions and to help the family to evaluate and to make corrections in their effort to develop a positive and supportive home life."

"I can understand what you're saying."

"So, we have identified a positive goal; to have a friendly family breakfast when you get home from the night shift. Like I said, I will work with your wife and children to bring that around. It's important that they work to improve the home life in this specific manner. It will be empowering. Don't mention any of this to your wife or your kids; allow me to do that."

"OK."

"You know that K has a lot to say and a lot to share. It's important to spend one-to-one time with him when you can. An hour walk along one of the park trails really benefits him. I hope that you can do this at least once a month."

"I know he needs the time, I just don't have any."

"There is one thing that you can do. I would like for you to gently provide verbal cues to K and to your wife to use the interventions when you see them begin to struggle. Your wife definitely can use the cues, and when K sees you providing them to her, he will be able to benefit from this type of role-modeling. Also when your wife sees you providing her and K with the cuing, she will feel your involvement and this will be a deep psychological support for her. She kind of feels that she is doing it all by herself, as she says you are working so hard she feels like a single mom."

So I did meet with the mom the following week and explained to her the benefit of having the family fix a breakfast meal for her husband so that he could feel the appreciation of the family.

"What about me? I need some appreciation also."

"You're right. It's important for your children to learn to express their appreciation to you and your husband. Still, it's got to start somewhere, and I guess because you aren't working at an 8 - 5:00, it probably will have to start with you. It will be good for you to be the leader in the recovery of your family."

"I am taking on-line classes, you know. I'm not just lying around all day."

"Of course not. Working with the children to help you make a nice breakfast for everyone to sit down with is a good idea. It could look like it is coming from me, or if you want, you can take credit for the idea with the kids. Which would you prefer?"

"I'll do it. When should we start?"

"Probably soon."

That's what was decided and she did speak with the kids and they agreed to do it.

But, "It was a mess with them helping make the pancakes. Still by the time he got home we had the food on the table. Do you know what he did? He wouldn't sit down, saying he was too tired to eat."

"Wow."

"We had a good breakfast, but it was depressing eating it without him."

"I'm amazed you are so cool telling me about it. I'm sure that I'd have been upset."

“I was upset, but it wouldn’t have done any good to make a big deal out of it. I will speak to him when he has a moment to relax.”

“I’m so impressed how you are choosing to deal with it. Kind of just like we have been working with K; thinking about the outcome and making sure what you do leads to that place.”

“You’re right. I’m working on applying what I am learning in dealing with K and applying it to the rest of them.”

“It must feel good.”

“It’s feeling better.”

“Feeling good is good!”

I continued to work with K and his mom on being more aware of his triggers that kick reactive behavior into hyper-drive. I had them sitting together with me, while the father kind of napped on and off.

“The whole trick of this is to see this as a game. The game is to prevent reactive behavior that engages verbal and physical aggression. This goes for everyone in this house. The way the previous game that you have been living was to do everything you can to trigger reactive behavior leading to stress, turmoil and chaos. That game is still available and whenever two or more of you want to play Insanity, go ahead. This isn’t really about eliminating any of the games. Instead it is about choosing which game you want to play. Peace, love and harmony or Anger, frustration and depression.”

“It isn’t that we wanted to be that way.”

“I understand that as an adult one wouldn’t choose to play the chaos game, however when that’s the only game available, well, it’s natural that that’s the game the family had to play. It wasn’t your fault because you weren’t taught that you were playing a game. Instead you were educated to believe that it was all a result of K’s problems and the struggle any parents would have to cope with. That is one perspective; rather limited though. This new perspective is about choice, and where before there was no choice, now there is. It does take new skills and that’s what your family is practicing. It’s empowering to know what games can be played, and then to choose together as a family which game you want to be living within. It’s called consciousness. Conscious choice for healthy living. So let’s discuss what triggers K.”

“I know what triggers me. Being ridiculed and being treated unfairly.”

“Great, K, those are the two triggers that set you off. Knowing what they are allows you to share with people when you are beginning to feel that those feelings are being generated. By doing that there is some time to prevent a full escalation of those feelings that lead to aggression.”

“What are we supposed to do if he doesn’t tell us about his feelings?”

“That’s the whole point of this. Certainly when we develop the ability to be empathetic we can sense when someone is having trouble. So what is needed are the skills for being empathetic. Let me just be clear about this. Empathy is about sensing where the other person is coming from, and not seeing the situation from our perspective. Seeing the experience through the feelings of the other person is the definition of empathy. So, even if you don’t agree with his feelings...it doesn’t make sense to put yourself in the position to believe that you have the right to judge whether the other person has those feelings or whether those feelings are even legitimate. What’s important is that you can be empathetic enough to sense what those feelings are and maybe even to

help K to express them. Then once they are “out” then the two of you can look at them in context of what has been happening.”

“Well, are you saying that all feelings are justified?”

“In this perspective, the feelings are real, but you are right, with other information or perspectives one may find that the feelings are misplaced or just a result of a misunderstanding. However, none of that challenges the fact that the person feels the way they do, and once that is recognized and acknowledged, then the possibility of sharing a wider perspective that can alter those feelings is feasible.”

“Yeah, I can understand that.”

“Remember the incident in the car when K’s sister “accused” him of using nasty language toward her, in review, you were able to change your judgment when you heard about the antecedents of his sister ridiculing him. Then when you judged him guilty and chose to impose the consequence of not letting him go to the Church youth group, he felt you were treating him unfairly and he escalated into aggression by pulling on the steering wheel.”

“Yes, I remember that and that helps me to get this.”

“So the game is won when you are able to anticipate K’s point of view and then with that knowledge you are then in the position to help him modify his perspective thus leading to a change in his feelings. In other words, that’s how you help de-escalate the situation that previously led to a triggering of aggression.

“Wow.”

“You’re right. Wow. It’s amazing, incredible, and fun. This is one of the best games you can play...Peace, love and harmony.”

By K participating in this conversation and being a witness to the interchange between his mom and me it elevated the degree of maturity and communication for everyone. The foundations were getting stronger. Another sequence that took place between K and me during our Bee Walks was another foundation builder.

K, when he gets onto a topic, will work it like no one else I have ever known, and I’ve known a good number of workers. His general anxiety about life repeatedly demonstrated itself during our walks. At the time, he was still getting used to bees and he would get into these “jags” (Monologues about a topic in which the person listening is silent, but the person talking speaks as though the other person is participating), about how to knock off, to kill the bees.

“I could bring a fly swatter and whack them out of the air. I could bring dry ice and freeze them in a puff of cold. I could build a battery run bug zapper and snag them that way. I could put pollen in a jar with a one way entrance and trap them. I could bring two cymbals and clang them to death. I could create a laser gun and blast them as they come out of their hives. I could bring a blanket and when they came to drink at the creek I could throw the blanket over them and stomp them to death. I could buy poison gas and puff them out of existence...”

OK, enough of the jag. “Sounds kind of like a junior level of genocide. You might share with me, from a botanist’s point of view what would happen if there were no bees left in the world.”

“Life would cease without pollinators.”

“Right. You know, K, it’s about scaring yourself that drives you to think of ways to kill all the bees that might ever have the possibility of stinging you. You’re scaring

yourself so much, and then you think of all these ways to protect yourself, and meanwhile in all the time we've spent out here on the trail not one bee has threatened you. You're going to kill off all the bees out of an illusion that you are fostering by focusing on an imaginary threat. I'm not sure that this line of thought is actually helping you to achieve your goal of becoming a man and being mature enough to acknowledge a fear, and then to work to overcome it. It seems that all that is happening is the opposite. By thinking non-stop on all of these defenses, you are just reinforcing your bee phobia."

"You're right."

So, for a while he was able to hike along the trail with a certain self-containment that allowed him to enjoy himself. We went to the end of the trail, or rather to the point that we turn back. This is just past another bridge that crosses the creek. I have him sit with me with the goal of not speaking for five minutes and in the silence to just listen to the sound of nature. In the beginning he'd last for fifteen to twenty seconds, but after a month or so, he could actually sit quietly and feel the peace. Or so I thought. He later told me that while we were being quiet, he wasn't listening to nature, but was thinking about ways of killing the bees. Still, being able to sit without speaking was an achievement. For the rest of the hike he spoke non-stop.

"You understand, that talking non-stop is a way of diverting yourself from the phobia, and that's not a bad approach. However, by speaking of ways to kill the bees is defeating your intent. I am asking you to listen to nature because I personally experience a type of conversation with nature that is very soothing and fascinating. To me nature is alive and in that way I'm kind of like a Native American who experiences that everything is alive and has a type of consciousness, even rocks. I would like you to experience this because when nature knows that you like her, she is more open to sharing herself with you. This sharing allows me to feel always in the company of a great spirit that cares about me, and this helps to reduce the anxiety I feel about certain things."

"I know about Native Americans." He then began to name all of the tribes in Southern California.

"K, I'm always amazed about how much information you know. What I would like for you to do is to start to wonder if it wouldn't be helpful to not only know information, but to also experiment with applying some of the positive cultural elements that you admire into your life."

"I kind of do that, but not many people feel good about it when I do it."

At this point a couple of hikers came up the trail. K will start a conversation with anyone in any circumstance and be totally unaware of the inappropriateness of what he says. Anyway I felt that we were really getting somewhere with the conversation about nature being alive, and a friendly nature that was open to sharing. However, these guys who were obviously not experienced, began asking about the danger of mountain lions. The hikers had come across a sign on the opposite side of the bridge that encouraged hikers and bikers to be aware that this was mountain lion country. Well, that was all it took and K began to speak of all the incidents of attacks that have taken place and in doing so initiated in himself the whole fear thing again. I don't like to interfere with K when he's interacting with the public, rather I usually wait until afterwards to bring up any concerns. Anyway, given the feeling of harmony I had felt with K was kind of "shattered" by the hikers inquiry into the danger of mountain lions and so kind of lost it myself and cut off their conversation in frustration. Afterwards I apologized to K.

“I’m sorry for cutting you off. I was so into our conversation in how nature is our friend and how everything is alive. I was feeling that you were getting it and that knowing this would assist you to manage your fears that come out of your anxieties.”

“Why, thank you for apologizing. No one ever does that.”

“K, I care about you and I really am interested in most of the topics that you speak about. It also helps me to understand you, and understanding people I care about it very important to me. It’s just that, well, we’ve been working so hard on finding a way for you to manage your phobias about bees and bugs, that when these guys started up with mountain lions, well, inside I was pissed off. Talking endlessly about all the ways to kill bees, I guess is getting to me because I really love nature and it bothers me when the topic of genocide comes up, like when the cattlemen decided that it was a good idea to kill all the buffalo so that they could run their herds on the same grazing area...well that type of behavior drives me crazy.”

“I don’t really want to kill all the bees, just the ones that come too close to me.”

“I’m glad to hear that. Still I wonder what would happen instead of focusing on killing we started to focus upon making life better for all living things?”

“Life being better is a good topic.”

“I mean, in looking at life it is full of struggle with a few people getting enough, or rather much more than enough, and the vast majority of people struggling just to get enough to eat, a place to sleep, to have clothing, and the hope of their children getting an education. I just wonder how it all happened this way, and more important, what can be done to make things work out better.”

“People are greedy. They always want to be in control. That’s why kids like me are in special schools. It’s because the adults don’t want us “contaminating” the rest of the kids with a different way of looking at things.”

“Do you really feel that way, that you are in special schools because you might “contaminate” the other kids?”

“Yes. We’re special and we are like the most advanced humans. We’re the newest models of humans. We’re smarter, more sensitive, and aren’t afraid to let everyone know it. It’s my feeling that Autism, and Asperger’s is a genetic advancement that is the leading edge of humanity.”

“I’ve never heard that idea, but you know, that might be true. I guess the main problem is figuring out how to be included rather than to be excluded.”

“Yes, as the first generation of this type of people we don’t have very many role models that successfully integrated and then contributed their gifts to the rest of humanity. All that our specialness has gotten us is isolation and therapy that aims at extinguishing our gifts.”

“That’s completely insightful. I guess you might be one of the first ones that has the potential of understanding all of this and our being together might just open up some pathways for a successful integration.”

K was turning more and more into a person who could teach me. I have always taken the position that my best teachers are my clients, but mostly it was in the manner in which I was able to interact with them. Now, I had to begin to wonder whether it was because they made it safe for me to be myself and this allowed them to be their selves and this mutual “allowing” made it possible for us to connect. When I look back, my best moments of interacting has always been with people who I served rather than with whom

I worked or who hired and supervised me.

Maybe it was the structure that my jobs provided us that allowed this connection to take place. I certainly didn't just meet them on the street. It's amazing how important structure is to my ability to function; not that this is a unique requirement, for people in general do better within a structured setting. I feel comfortable with people of all backgrounds, yet at the same time I wonder if I really am. At times I wonder if I'm not just a bit Aspergery. In fact while I feel positive about people from varied cultures I don't feel that comfortable interacting with people who hold values that stray too far from my center. Within the work setting I can interact with my peers somewhat, but I never would want to spend time with them socially except to "excuse" myself from the current moment.

"Well, I handled that well" as I extricated myself from that situation.

Hmm. That's kind of a disturbing insight. I'm an artist, but I feel very insecure around other artists. I feel anxiety and maybe fear because they can be so unpredictable. I guess if I spend time with them then my behavior easily becomes unpredictable and I find that somehow disturbing and anxiety producing. I mean my tendency is to not follow the rules and yet I do because I am working hard to stay in contact with the norm so that I can contribute to it by hopefully expanding some of its boundaries. For me, it just seems that I don't get the meaning of rules unless I break them and experience the situation in that way.

"Well, Oh, I see...those rules just might be helpful."

I feel very uncomfortable when I have to fit into someone else's structure, whether it was at home with my parents who would judge me, in a school classroom with a teacher who would grade me, in a band with a leader who would direct the score, on an athletic team where the coach would choose the first team and who sat on the bench, or in a relationship with a woman who would be the one to set the goals and the system of being pleased. When I look back it is clear, at least in my mind, that it was through my being anxious to please the women and their shared ability not to be pleased that they gained a degree of control over me...I mean they were in control over how I felt by not allowing me to please them. The harder I worked to please them the less pleased they said they were. At some point it became abusive and then unbearable and then I just disconnected. That always preceded the breakup...the disconnect. Why was I so anxious to please? The few times that I played it cool and made the woman seek me out, and never allowing her to feel pleased, well the more she wanted to be with me. Actually I was being increasingly pleased, however, if I let her know that, then the whole thing flipped and well, it seems that the balance of mutual accepting and acknowledged pleasing is an ideal...that was my real goal and intention...just found it difficult to find the right partner or group.

Actually, in the beginning I was always pleased to have made the connection. I mean why would I have been oriented to be part of the relationship unless I was highly motivated? Trying out for a relationship, then being accepted feels great whether it is trying to make the swimming team, making it as a member of a band, or trying to hook it up with a woman...yeah, the initial connecting always felt great. But, it never lasted. I mean sometimes it lasted for years, but not forever, through thick and thin, through health and illness...etc.

Yet there is a paradox, for those relationships provide me with the links to social

interaction without which I would likely become more and more isolated. Like, until recently I would never go up to a stranger to meet them unless there is some form of structure like in a class or at a party, or through my work. I used to be unable to just walk up to a woman to whom I was attracted and just start a conversation, or walk up to someone at a park and seek a connection. I would think of it, but I wouldn't do it. That would fall into the category of fantasy. I do however connect eye-to-eye when I walk by certain people, and will even initiate a salutation, but not be willing to pursue that moment because I feel that my way of being is too removed to allow them to feel they'd want to stay in any relationship that we created. The way I see the world is highly attractive to people because of my artistic and "visionary" talent however in reality there is very little room in there for anyone else. I'm not even sure any of this is accurate...it just appears to be, for now. I mean, being in control...like being the owner of a company, like being a leader of a band, like being the father of a family...not in this time and age. Anyway, if I really wanted to be in the position of leader I would have, but there is something in me that always takes precedent...being an equal and sharing partner. That's what motivates me. That's what drives me to project and externalize that and causes my value system to evaluate social, financial, or political relationships in how close they come to democracy...that's what makes me feel that things are fair or unfair...and if unfair I fight to equalize the struggle and that can get me into a lot of trouble, and end up in being excluded from the relationship. Equal with a boss, not reasonable, huh?

Well, finding meaning in a relationship with my clients and for them to find meaning in it also is a great feeling, and I guess I'm fortunate to allow myself to work in places where all of this is possible for me. I feel very comfortable walking into a strange home, or to meet M and his family at the therapist's office. The structure is in place through my job and I'm highly functional with this support. When I take the kid into my car and go for an outing it is easy for me because again the social dynamic is part of the structure and it has rules and boundaries that allow me to "behave" and allows me a means of placing limits on the social situation that keeps everyone safe. It has a beginning, a purpose, a goal, and an ending. I also get to leave the situation after a few hours. Somehow this works for me. And in a personal relationship, with the continuous and unending nature of a permanent personal relationship, it becomes overwhelming and unsustainable. I might even say that I become overwhelming and unsustainable.

I guess building the "breaks" into a personal relationship, thus reducing the intensity levels is critical for me to having a safe and fulfilling relationship. Accepting that in the other person is also helpful; the need to have breaks and time off, if not alone. It seems that this quality is not built into the home life of my clients as the "disability" of K and his parents instigate too frequent and too intense an interaction; mainly in the area of dissatisfaction and disappointment. K is too demanding and so are the parents with setting expectation way too high and not appreciating what is actually done or accomplished.

So, what I am saying is that I realize my nature is not all that different than that of the kids and parents that I work with and this allows me to feel comfortable. Interestingly, and for the same reasons, I am very uncomfortable around people who delude themselves, but have the power to impose their way of thinking as healthy and will be the norm through which everyone else is judged.

It kind of operates like this. If you agree with that norm and can operate within it,

then you're healthy and very likely happy. For those who disagree, but can function within it, then they are just unhappy, but are healthy enough to stay in the system. If you can't at least operate within it, even if you don't agree with it, then you are unhealthy and there is no room for you within the system. Then there are those people who agree with the system, but can't get a foot in the door because of social ostracism, or because of some disability, or because of environmental influences that isolate them from participating. That too is sad. So, K falls into this later category and so his group is referred to mental health services. I suppose I am in the middle category, unhappy with the system but can manage my feelings well enough to work within the system. That wasn't always true for I believe I set a record in the field of mental health for being asked to move on. Somehow I became too upset with program directors and administrators when their concerns for my client's welfare was subordinate to needs of the system to perpetuate itself through keeping hold of the client through poor delivery of service. Poor service, little improvement...K remains a client and the money keeps coming on in. It's great to have all the beds filled, more money honey. Get too effective, and empty beds, loss of income...poor business practice.

One day I woke up to the fact that getting into a fight with the bosses only led to me being dismissed and then, so much for my concern about my clients. I figured it was better to keep my mouth mostly shut and keep the job so that I could continue with the work to help my clients feel good about themselves and make some progress toward some sense of independence. My issue? Basically it was the old "Love me or leave me," syndrome. "It's my house. I pay the bills. You don't like it, get out." Or, "Love America, as I define it, or Leave it." The truth of it is in the power of those saying it to get rid of me one way or another. That's the lesson that is critical. Don't mess with the crocodile if you're its food source."

What does this have to do with K? Everything. But before how this all dovetails, I would like to share one more interchange between K and me. It was on the way back from the hike in which I had apologized to him for getting uptight about him getting into his fear phobia, this time about mountain lions.

"You have such an amazing mind and ability to be creative in your thoughts such as a thousand and one ways to kill bees. It would be very satisfying to me if you could also choose to use your mind to figure out how we as humans can get along better between each other and between us and nature. It's such a wonderful feeling to focus one's abilities on "saving the world."

"I can do that."

"Great. I wonder how saving the world can be achieved. That's really where I spend most of my creative energies, attempting to break the "mind coding" that leads people to destroy themselves after spending so much time building what they call civilization. I feel that the interventions that I have offered you and your family are the leading edge of my work to contribute to a change from conflict to building harmony."

"What we need is a new religion. In history of people, religion is the most powerful force for good and not good."

"I like what you are saying. It's true that religion is always connected to the building of civilization. The religions are OK, but somehow they forget that we are all connected, and like in any family sibling rivalry develops."

"I find this very interesting. What we need is a symbol for oneness. It would be a

religion that accepts all other religions, and promotes that everyone and everything is part of the whole. Why don't we just call the religion, "Oneness."

"Yes, a great name. Oneness."

So we spoke of this great new religion, Oneness, and spoke of all the unifying values of carrying for Life and the necessity to promote the maintenance of its health.

"Yes, so there has to be enough for every human to have a healthy life. That means that everyone has an inalienable right to have their share."

"I agree K. That is the critical anchor of Oneness. Also I might suggest that "enough" be defined as the level that assures the health of the planet and of all life on it."

"Yes, ecological Oneness. I can't wait to share this."

"I guess it would have to start within you first. Living a healthy life as a role model is such much more meaningful than to just preach about it. See what it takes to be in Oneness. Use yourself as an experiment. I believe that as you do this you will become a symbol for youth, not like a rock star, but as an Oneness star. Then I believe that you will find people who care about the earth and the overall welfare of humanity to be the ones from which you will find the girlfriend that you are looking for."

K wanted to fit in. I knew about fitting in. There is no better way to start to fit in than to care about the welfare of those with whom we want to associate. That's how we become connected, how we became partners. When I started with K he was lost. I'm a tracker. I don't track to hurt, but to help. It took a few months but now I had found him. Finding him was one thing. Bringing him back is completely another thing. I personally learned the hard way that worse than being lost is to be brought back to our society once having escaped it without being provided with the skills of coping and survival. So, before bringing him back, my work with K has all along been to teach him the skills and attitude that would help him survive, how to cope, and how to find a place for himself. That was the part that we were working on. I listened to him for months in order to find him. I had to calm his spirit sufficiently so that he would allow me to communicate. Once that was achieved he practiced with me until he was proficient and then we worked diligently to transfer these skills to his parents, to his peers, and eventually to his teachers.

We were having our usual meal at Taco Bell and K looked at me and said, "I really appreciate you teaching me how to get along with my family. Do you think that you could do the same with me so that I could get along with kids my age?"

"Why, yes I do believe that can be done. It takes the same skills however the key element of doing this is to establish what it is that gives you some ability to relate at their level. Take the kids at your school. All of them are lost like you were before we hooked up. As we have talked about once or twice, you have been in special education programs since you were young. The consequence has been that your socialization and that of the kids you were placed with was fostered by the type of kids you all were. Just imagine being with you the way you were before we began working on this stuff. Not easy to view that as "normal." You and your peers at school just reinforced each of the unusual behaviors that you brought with you. Not your fault, and not really the fault of anyone. It's just the way the system is set up. In order to give you special help you all were put into a special class, thus cutting you off from the norm of social development. Make sense?"

"Yes it does."

“So I wonder what is needed for you to cruise into at least the edge of the norm?”

“Why, I have to be able to fit in somehow, right?”

“Right. Now, most of the music you like has to do with Miley Cyrus. I wonder what sixteen year old youth are listening too?”

“I don’t like rap. The lyrics are sick.”

“OK, I know that there are rappers that spit out their pain and suffering and it is very upsetting to listen to that. Still not all rappers are of that kind, just like there are different personalities putting out music in rock.

So I guess we have to be willing to become more familiar with the kind of kids that are “normal” and with whom you want to hang. This doesn’t require you to try to be like them, more it’s about being able to relate to them. However, it makes it easier if you look somewhat like them especially in the manner of dress. When you look at the clothes you wear that your mom has picked out for you, and you compare it to the kids that say live in your complex, well it needs some work. Frankly the kind of clothes you wear are a bit juvenile for you. They make you look a bit funny to the kids in the complex.”

“Wow, there’s a lot of things that I need to learn.”

“Right, but why not look at it as just another download, like from another computer program. Currently you have been operating on your mother’s viewpoint of how a youth should look like. Doesn’t really work unless you are at the special school. What you need to do is to explain to your mother that your goal is to start to fit in with kids that live in your complex and that you need to at least dress somewhat like them so you don’t look like a big kid in children’s clothes and colors.”

“I can do that.”

“Great. You might want to bring it up to your therapist so that you can get his support before you start with your mom.”

“Good idea.”

K actually did this and spoke with his therapist who agreed. As I also met with his therapist once a week for supervision I brought it up and asked him to support K’s goal of fitting in.

One of the most fascinating outcomes to all of our work was that as K began to be able to just hang out with me, his speech patterns began to alter. I believe that this was a result of the method of our work as he was actually locating and engaging in his missed developmental stages. As he worked his way through them his ability to keep tuned in to what was happening around him improved because “reality” became less threatening. Bees and nature were no longer frightening. Oneness was entering his life. What was also interesting was that I noticed that his tic of his unusual head movement began to diminish especially during our hikes along the trails in the regional park. I used to put my hand on his neck when he was walking along side me and that physical touch acted like a cue and he would correct his posture. Now, it was hardly required. Also beneficial was the fact that his stuttering ceased while we were hiking, and was less prevalent in other situations. It was wonderful.

We talked also of the importance of listening. It was my belief and K agreed with this hypothesis that his need to speak constantly was a means of “denying” the social and physical situation around him in which he had been so unsuccessful. Therefore by speaking ceaselessly he was in fact self-stimulating and simultaneously creating an individual alternative reality in which he was the center and everything and everyone else

was an auxiliary player. It was when the auxiliary people and environments impinged on his creative reality that he became frightened and upset and that was the source of his aggressive/self-defensive behavior. The talking was a control factor, a buffer, a form of insulation against the painful shock of being with people.

So a highpoint of our work was when he was able to accept this and understand how it defeated his real goal of being socially adept; holding back his effort to having friends, especially a girlfriend. We then went to work on his ability to listen. It really started a few months before with me encouraging him to listen to nature at certain points of our hike. It also came about from me being willing to tell him that he needed to stop talking at times because I was becoming exhausted. I shared that I was exhausted as a result of the requirement that in order to have a relationship with him I had listen to him non-stop. I let him know that I just couldn't only just listen to him as I had a need to also communicate to him. I let him know how much I cared about our relationship and that part of my care for him was to help him care enough about me so that he would be motivated to overcome his need to be in control. Eventually I would just place my hand on his shoulder and ask for a few minutes of quiet. His willingness to provide me with what I needed allowed me to discuss with him how much I appreciated the fact that he was willing to help me feel better about our time together and how important that was in a reciprocal relationship. He came to understand that this was a prerequisite to him having social relationships that might lead to friendships.

“So this is like a social program to download. When you want to be with someone it's critical that you discover what is of interest to them before you start to share all that is interesting to you. Them first, you second. When you see them, be sure to greet them with a salutation that they can relate to like, 'What's up?' If you're meeting up with them after school anticipate how they are doing at school. If they are having trouble at school don't speak of all that you know, it just makes them feel dumb. Say something like, 'School is such a drag. I'd rather be hanging out here than there.' This will provide them with an opening to share with you something similar or even tell you about their experiences at school. Resist trying to help them because you want to be sort of at their level and not set yourself above them. That never works when you want to form a friendship. That doesn't mean you have to do poorly at school to hang out with them, but it does mean that you don't have to demonstrate how bright you are, which will only make them envious and that never goes anywhere good.”

So we practiced this through role-playing and he kind of got into it. I told him, “It's no different then learning all of the Miley Cyrus songs. It's your new dialogue when you want to hang out with kids. Just download it and use it when you are with them and see how it turns out. Just remember to also drop the volume of your voice as though you are in a choir, one voice among others...not the soloist.”

So after a few weeks of working on his listening skills he put it into place with his peers at his apartment complex; youth with whom in the past he would never have been able to interact. First he made contact with a kid who lived next door who was responsive to him. This kid then introduced K to all the other kids and he increasingly reported to me his excitement that they were responsive to him. It got so good that some of them began to hang out in his house and to come to the door to ask for him.

It was not long after that I had the opportunity to see him in action. He and I were returning from a hike and he was very excited to see his friends who were just hanging

out. So I parked the car, and instead of him going into his house he went up to his best friend, the kid from next door and sat next to him and gave the salutation we discussed and it was a bit funny but he spoke in a voice barely above a whisper, “So how’s it?”

The next time we were together he confided to me, “You know, the kids are asking me who you are. I don’t want to tell them that you are my coach and part of my therapy.”

“Hmmm. Thanks for sharing that with me. I can see how this is going to be a problem. Let me think for a moment. Hey, why not just tell them that I’m a friend of the family.”

“Yeah, but they are wanting to know where we go and what we do.”

“Tell them the truth, that we go hiking in the regional park and that we hang out with the deer, watch for eagles, and you are teaching me the names of the plants while I teach you about exploring the nature trails that we hike.”

“That sounds good. I’ll let you know how it works out.” It did.

It was at this point that I had to stop my professional work with K. His progress and that of his family warranted the award of “Success.” So, when this happens or when no further progress can be made that is the time that my work stops. I had a final meeting with K, his family and the professional team to say goodbye. It was incredible. K wrote a letter of appreciation for the work that we did together and it was so moving. In the end I gave him a big hug... which was evidently surprising to the team for K never allowed anyone to touch him. Hmmm. I didn’t know that and I had been touching him on the shoulder to give him a physical cue to cease the head tics for months. OK, another notch into my “magic” that I work with my kids...or really the magic that they work with me. It’s an Us thing and like K calls it, “Our Oneness.”

K’s LETTER OF APPRECIATION

It’s been excellent being with you. After all, it was you who gave me the ability to be around people and not go crazy! It was you who taught me that making friends and communicating with my family ain’t so hard after all. You coached me, made me strong, took fears out of my mind, and made me feel good, if not excellently comfortable about the world. Communicating with my family was a problem for me, not you. You made it feel like a piece of cake! You used things like the computer parables as well as changing my speaking ways of communication. You succeeded at “rewriting the OS (operating system)” that made me think the way I did. And the bees? You sure got me over that fear! You took me up to Whiting Ranch Park passed the beehives, teaching me that they only sting when their lives are threatened. You also got me over other fears such as the high voltage overhead power lines in the park. Thank you for all your hard work. You made me strong enough to communicate with my family and not get into trouble in the process! W/o getting paranoid! You helped me learn the best of both worlds: bees are docile and communication with my parents and people ain’t so bad after all!

5. W.

Ok, it's about crapping in your pants when ten years-old. What's that about? A new case. Why me? Still, I fathered four kids and changed their diapers...no big deal. Got peed on once or twice. I remember with my first son while he was on the changing table I dropped something. So, I bent down and retrieved it and as I straightened up to changing table height, he peed me from the top of my head to my belt. A straight line of pee. Funny. Couldn't believe it.

"Hey, whenever you feel angry at me and I'm too big for you to do anything about it, just remember this time when you pissed your dad and it'll make you feel better about me bossing you around."

W was endearing from the first moment I met him. He was small for his age and looked about six or seven. When he walked around his block for some reason or other women driving by stopped being so concerned.

"Hey, you lost honey? Where's your mommy?"

W got really upset when that happened, "I'm no honey. I'm ten. I know who I am and where I am so you just go on about yourself."

W lived in a very nice home with his grandma, her much younger longtime boyfriend, his son, and their hyperactive dog that couldn't stop moving unless he was sitting on my foot while I petted him. I have a thing with dogs.

The grandma worked for the government in the Homeland Security Office identifying illegal immigrant gang members that were periodically picked up by the team with whom she worked. Her boyfriend was recovering from a leg injury, a messed up job that had to be operated on twice when the first doctor messed up. He was in the last stages of a divorce the result of which was his son was coming to live with him. His daughter wasn't talking to him, siding with her mom and chose to continue to live with her. He mother controlled his deceased father's estate and he was kind of living on part of the income. He was a really easy guy to hang out with, but he really didn't have much to do with W, because his girlfriend, W's grandma was running the house.

It's interesting that when working with a "dysfunctional family," that's what we call them, they kind of are dysfunctional because the adult who is running the home is usually the strongest and also the most messed up. I don't have anything against being messed up, except when the outcome is a messed up life for those living together with that person. I mean, I'm not angry about the most messed up being the most powerful...sometimes it's the kid who is the one most messed up and running the home. It's just that well, that's kind of how the world works. It's so messed up because the ones running it who are the most powerful are the most messed up of all. Worse, I guess, is that everyone wants to be like them...I mean powerful, not messed up. I suppose the more messed up you are the more power you seek. The weak tantrum to get their way while the powerful wave their hands and give edicts that the lackey's run to execute. It's the old "My way or the highway." So could it be that not only are the most powerful the most messed up, but that they're so messed up because they are nothing but a reflection of what people themselves seek? Probably some combination of the two; like always. Hot and cold combine to make warm. Warm is great in a shower. Not too hot, not too cold. And to have control over the knobs. Bliss.

So the Grandma was running the home. So where was the boy's father, the

grandma's son? Living about fifty miles away doing his own thing, except when he drove down on every other weekend to pick up his son. Or in his words, "Fifty miles is a safe distance from a nuclear energy plant...quick visits with protective gear...in and out as quick as possible."

How did Grandma end up with W? When W's dad was a teenager and into his early adult years he was into drugs and dealing. His "wife," the mother of W was into the drugs too and into some kinky drug sex stuff. One day, when W was only four, W's dad walked into the bedroom and saw his wife holding W's head between her legs while he was licking her. This flipped W's dad out and he beat the crap out of her. He was arrested, a wife abuser and at court for some reason of "honor" he refused to testify in his own defense and was sentenced to time. W was taken into social services and fostered with a family who eventually wanted to adopt him. To prevent the adoption W's dad asked his mother to go to court to fight for custody over W, and she won. So, when W's dad was released from prison, and after a year or two of staying straight and working he asked his mother to release his son back to him. Unfortunately, it was recommended at the court hearing when the grandmother was seeking custody, that it was the opinion of the judge that W's dad shouldn't ever gain custody of his son. Or so the story went. I never saw any documents. I was never sure of this though and as time went by it appeared that Grandma had other reasons for not releasing W to his dad, who really had straightened up. He was into church, his girlfriend was a professional woman with her own business and had a son W's age, and he was self employed and working hard and making a living.

To put it mildly, W's dad was not happy with his mother when she started putting all sorts of restrictions on his spending time with his son. What he wanted was to be W's dad again and make it all right. So the grandma and her son were into this "tragic" relationship where she didn't really trust him and his self-esteem demanded that he prove to himself and to his son that he could be a good father. This conflict became W's conflict and the split loyalties were overwhelming to him thus leading to some very strange behaviors.

When I read the case notes of most concern to me was that W was addicted to drugs at birth. It was common for such kids to be undersized, have a ton of behavioral problems and such. I immediately asked the therapist to authorize a Neuropsychological Evaluation to determine the amount of brain processing dysfunction. This never happened, so I just began to operate as though the report defined various auditory and visual processing breakdowns such as W not correctly processing what he heard being said because his brain might be substituting what it felt was reasonable given the circumstances. This happens a lot with people anyway. They hear just the beginning part of the conversation then they kind of start to think about what initially was said, and by the time they tune back in they've missed a chunk. The mind then attempts to fill in the blank and often incorrectly, but because that's what the mind does the person actually believes the part that was filled in was actually heard. This of course would lead to repeated misunderstandings such as:

"That's not what I said."

"Yes it is. I just heard you." (Not really, it's just what W's brain did to fill in the blank; that part that he missed and didn't process.)

"Well then you heard me wrong." (Accurately stated, but without understanding

why W heard it wrong.)

“No I didn’t.” (W actually believes what his brain substituted was actually said.)

When I first began meeting with the family there was some talk about W acting out sexually. He was masturbating the family dog, exposing himself in the school bathroom, sometimes peeing on the foot of the kid next to him at the urinal, and getting into pornography on the internet while his Grandma and her boyfriend were asleep. Hmmm, didn’t anyone remember that W was used as a child dildo by his mother instead of masturbating herself? It had been years since that time in his life and hadn’t anyone addressed the outcome of such an experience for a four year old. Then there was the peeing in his bed and W having bowel movements while at school or on the way home from school. He had been in therapy his whole life and it was a bit surprising that these issues had not been dealt with. Also because he was in special education and participating in the YMCA’s before and after school program it was difficult to understand how there was no coherent program to help W with these issues.

Peeing in bed and crapping in his pants...well it can be a medical problem and or a psychological problem. Peeing and crapping one’s pants is what babies do. The trauma of his life was enough to knock him back a few developmental stages. Sexual abuse, witnessing the physical aggression, being taken away from his parents, being taken away from his foster family, the infighting for him between his father and his grandma...yeah, that can do it.

Normally I take my kids into the community, you know, to get something to eat during which I conduct business about stuff that is messing the kid’s life up, and then engage in a physical activity such as hiking or sports. With W I had no intention of taking him into my car with his problem of dropping a load without warning. Also, because he was in the YMCA after school program and this was located at his school that was next door to a shopping center, I was intending to take him to get something to eat just by walking over there. I would leave transportation to his grandma.

To get a feeling for his social interaction I arranged to meet with W at the Y after school program so that I could get an idea of how he interacted with staff and peers. I also arranged to meet earlier in the day with his grandma and her boyfriend on the days I would be meeting with W so that I could gain some insight into their parenting philosophy and get a feeling of their teamwork in regards to raising W.

I initially met with W and his Grandma at the therapist’s office. He did make eye contact, but shyly. He’d be playing with a toy, ignoring everyone, but every once in a while he would glance up and then I’d make a funny face and immediately look away. I could see the smile in his eyes until he realized that he was responding then he’d put on a frowny face and look away. The therapist, who was a student intern, explained that she was just beginning to work on his peeing and crapping himself. She was inexperienced, but made up for it by being sweet, nurturing and empathetic. Unfortunately a month or so after I started her internship ended and his case was assigned to another therapist who was neither empathetic or nurturing. She was a disciplinarian, authoritarian, and arrogant to boot. She was also an intern and prior to her starting her study she had been running a large program; probably accounting for her attitude. She was used to being dominant and surprise, surprise so was grandma. It was sick. There was no way that grandma was going to allow another Type A take control over her domain. Trying to grab control over the family was a big mistake and of course the therapist went down in a trail of

smoke...kerplunk...or is it kerplo? Either way, she was fired by grandma after a few months. And guess what...another therapist was assigned. This one was sweet and seemingly passive, however she wasn't passive, but used this approach to get under grandma's radar. Pretty effective too. We worked well as a team. It's nice working with someone who understands leading by following. No threat that way. But all that came about five months after I began.

When I started coming to visit W at the Y after school program I would stay in sight but refrain from coming up to interact so that he would feel a degree of control when he would connect with me. I'd just sit in the school room where W was engaged with his peers in some craft or game, or find him out on the playground with a Y staff. He was completely isolated in both settings. When he was in the class room he'd be sitting by himself either working on a project but more often just playing with a solitary game. Out on the playground he was always on the peripheral. As I said earlier he was very small for his age, but physically quite active and while he had only simple sports skills I felt that there was no reason why that couldn't be remediated.

Well, that's not completely true. I mean it was true that there was no physical disability, but it soon became clear that his inability to play at the level of his peers made him feel bad about himself every time he tried to compete. This just reinforced his low self-esteem and staying on the edge of play was emotionally less demanding. Because his dad was in jail at a critical juncture in his development he missed out on the eye hand coordination games that kids played with their parents. It was shared by his grandma that when W's dad met with him on the visits she would allow him their activity was limited to getting something to eat and maybe a movie, but not physical play. The grandma's boyfriend who was athletic had other priorities and well, grandma didn't make it easy on her boyfriend to participate. He told me that initially he had made the effort, but with her constantly putting him down hard he just lost his heart in this and became detached to protect his sensitive nature. Any way, with his leg problem he wasn't in any position to work with W.

The Y staff was well coordinated by a very capable program director. W was very well known by the staff as he had attended this program for years. Unfortunately, W's history at the after school program was a history of W being bullied by the older, bigger and physically more capable kids. There also was a significant age variable. W was not only small, but there were kids there eleven and twelve, and they were more coordinated than W and obviously their families had invested in their physical skills. They could play ball whether it was baseball, football, or basketball. It was only in soccer that W could kind of hold his own. Because of his size he'd hang out on the edge until someone made a mistake then dart in and steal the ball. Unfortunately he didn't have any of the other skills such as dribbling or passing, so the ball was quickly stolen back.

When I started working with W at the Y program, the older boys were still bullying and ridiculing him. I mean he wasn't exactly innocent, as he had a mouth and used it when he got frustrated and well, I had to hand it to him...he wasn't sniveling about the abuse. He was in their face as they put him down...spitting and kicking, and getting in a bite when he could. He had spunk. Because I was visiting W so often and taking him out of the classroom to play a bit of basketball, the other kids became curious as to who I was and why W was getting to spend time with me. I guess that developed into a kind of jealousy. You know, boys and girls in that age group still seek the

individual attention of adult males and females. They spend so much time away from their parents, being in school and the Y after school program...and by the time they get home...dinner and homework, and then to bed. So, I turned that jealousy into envy, and then into opening the door for them to participate with W and me when possible.

The bad boys hung back, but there were a number of boys who lived with single parents, and a number of them kind of looked like they were lost and confused. Seeing the special attention that W was getting, they wanted some too. So I gave them some and soon there was a small group hanging out with W so that they could get it too. Also, in response to a suggestion that I made, the program director had a couple of sessions with the kids about bullying and the need for Y kids to be open to helping the younger or less capable kids, rather than putting them down. The whole staff got into this and this worked well and was to the advantage of the work that I was doing on improving W's social skills and willingness to engage with peers. It wasn't long after that there was a real shift in attitude and the bad boys were being much more like good boys, being patient and supportive of the younger kids that didn't have it all together. It was surprising how fast this all turned around. It took a few months, but then every once in a while the more capable boys wanted in to the games that I was forming and well, it all became integrated and all the kids were enjoying themselves much more, including W.

At home he was on his own. Usually on the way home he'd fight with his grandma, and if he hadn't already spotted his underwear or dropped a load he did it on the way home. Because he was so small even though he was ten he had to sit in a car seat, which was totally humiliating, legal but embarrassing. There he was in the back seat in a child booster car seat...goodness. It's amazing how resilient and how well he was holding himself together. As soon as he got home there was a big fight over him changing his clothes. He was incredible. He'd stand there face to face with his grandma denying that he had an "accident." Man, the smell was proof enough, but no, there was W red faced, mouth running a mile a minute, denying any such thing. The situation just kept escalating and this engaged the hyperactive dog who began running in circles around them barking like crazy. Through all of this, there sat the boyfriend doing his own thing, totally unengaged, completely uninvolved. It was a scene. Eventually after threatening mayhem, and being told that he wouldn't be able to visit with his dad, W would retreat into the bathroom to take a shower.

After the shower, another fight would ensue over whether he actually had showered himself. I later discovered that he was afraid of being alone in the bathroom. Another fight followed over him picking up his crapped on clothes, rinsing them out and putting them in the washing machine. It was incredible, the teamwork between W and his grandma...it was a scene...parts being played whole heartedly, no holding back. I could just feel them; their love for each other and the intense level that they played with each other's emotions. Well, it wasn't any different for grandma's relationship with her son. Nope. It was a repeat. I guess grandma was very practiced with her son, so that when she got hold of her grandson, well W never had a chance. Still, she had a good heart...just a bit twisted...not her fault...she had parents that had worked her over the same way. OK. Let's even the field.

I started to work with grandma.

"It's time to get this peeing and crapping under control. What do you think of making sure that he pees before he goes to sleep, and who ever goes to bed last, either

you or your boyfriend get him up and have him pee once more. If you get up in the middle of the night to pee, then get him up again for another shot. It wasn't too surprising that they resisted at first, but with constant reminders and with an increased feeling by them that I was the real thing, they started to get into it and guess what. The peeing in bed slowed down and then stopped. The crapping was another thing. W used it to show how upset he was. The father told me that when W was still very young, but after being toilet trained he drop his pants and crap on the floor if he was really upset. OK...it gets the message across, except they weren't taking it the right way. They just saw the crapping and missed the message how pissed off he was. It never occurred to them to wonder about why he was so upset. I did, and I spoke to W about this and he was right there. He thought it was the only way he could express his discontent with the constant fighting between his grandma and his father. I asked the therapist to begin family therapy so that W could see some evidence that they were taking his situation seriously, and to stop placing all the blame on him. For real.

Again, it so common that the parents, in this case his grandma and father, looked at the kid as the culprit...the one with the emotional problems, the one with the behavioral problems, the one that was driving them nuts.

"Hey, how would you feel taking all the heat that isn't any of your fault?"

That's what I passed by the father and his grandma, individually, not when they were together. The grandma had been abused as a child, though she believed that she was a great mother to her son, the father of W. Still he ended up a drug addict and dealer...couldn't all have gone so well. And he had terrible memories of the stuff that went down between his mother and his father. All sorts of accusations, separation, divorce...blah.

"Say, with lives like this any one would have trouble handling family relationships. It's no one's fault...everyone has had bad childhood experiences that leads to trouble in adult relationships. It's all about accepting this and acting to get this in a better place so that childhood abuse doesn't have to be lived out in endless cycles in adult life."

The second therapist attempted therapy between the father and his mother and given her insensitivity and belief in herself...they'd come out of their session with flames...two dragons. Not good to open up issues without the experience to manage the emotional release and of greater importance, with the experience to provide some degree of closure so that people are not going to murder each other as soon as they are out of the office. Nope...it just got worse and worse...until she was fired.

"Hey, the kid is just signaling his distress for all the stuff that's going down between the two of you. Each of you have to cool it. It's time to get past incrimination and get to work learning how to manage those feelings. That's why I'm here. Prove that you really care about W and support me in my effort to help all of you to learn how to hold it together so that you limit the damage that you are putting on W with all the conflict. All that this is teaching him is that it's not safe to have intimate relationships. Relationships scare him for good reason given the role modeling that is taking place around him."

Yeah, even the field. There was W the bad child, a solo player in the home being expected to be an adult and not a seriously abused child, and there was his grandma the judge, and the boyfriend an amused but depressed spectator, and the boy's father blaming

and judging just like his mother. This wasn't fair. So, let's get everyone out onto the field. I came up with a plan to have the adults come with me when I took W to the local park to practice his sports skills and to learn how to manage the hyperactive dog while taking him for a walk. Again, it's critical to the work that I do to put into place a physical and concrete activity that is the lever for reframing the family dynamics and acts as a fulcrum for the challenge of making changes.

Starting with the family dog, I persuaded the mother to allow me to take W and the dog on a walk with me around the block. It's a thing, a boy and his dog. Getting it right kind of determines the kid's relationship with the world at large. Here, the dog was taking the kid for a walk. That had to stop. It wasn't fair to the kid and it wasn't fair to the dog. I know a bit about dog/human relationships. Most of the time dogs run the house, but they really don't want to. So I had the mother place a choke chain on the dog, and I held onto the leash with W walking besides me. The dog should have been a puppy when it came to the house to be W's dog. However he came full grown and from an abusive owner. The dog was too big and way too strong for W to manage without some previous training in place. It was a set up for another relationship failure, but not for long. So every time the dog tried to pull ahead of me I pulled on the leash and gave the command to sit. Pulling on the choke chain, it did its work and the dog immediately slowed down and then sat. After a few times around the block, the dog was walking besides us with no pulling. Any time I gave the dog the sit command, he sat. Then I had W give the sit command and the dog sat. At that point I handed the leash to W with the instruction to pull hard on the leash should his dog not obey. He got into it and within a few minutes the dog was walking calmly by his side. This was an incredible experience for W and it cemented our relationship. I could really help him in ways that were important to him.

Once I started to connect with him at the Y after school program I began to also take him to the local fast food in the adjacent shopping center to get a bite. While he was seated eating his stuff I would engage with him about his hopes.

"So little dude you're kind of like your dog. Just never had anyone that could connect with you and teach you how things work."

"Work?"

"Yeah. You know. When kids try something they don't know how to do they can't help but mess up. Because they're kids they don't know that and instead just kind of feel dumb. Soon they don't want to do that new thing because it makes them feel bad."

"Hmmm."

"Yeah, hmmm. Now adults who have it together teach their children that learning takes steps, like climbing stairs. Got to do them one at a time. So just like with your dog; he wanted to be your buddy and you wanted him to be able to go with you on walks and for romps. However he was missing something. He was missing knowing how to do that. So when you tried to walk him he was just too excited to be outside where all those smells are and he just couldn't hold himself together. So walking him was like you being dragged from bush to bush, right?"

"Right."

"But what happened when I taught him how to walk with me, he also learned how to walk with you. Then going for a walk with him was simple. Well, life is just like that. Here you are ten and it's not your fault, but you really haven't learned how to do a lot of

things that you need to know.”

“I know stuff.”

“Yeah, you do, and yet there a lot of stuff you also need to know and we can do that, if we work together. You’re young, intelligent and energetic. I’m old, patient, and am in the know.”

“In the know?”

“Yeah. Like I know how to do things and I know how to teach them. Just like I did with your pup.”

“Can you do that with me.”

“Of course, yet you got to be there right with me. What you don’t know how to do is how to hang out with kids in a fun way. It’s always competitive and at times threatening. That’s because you can’t play the way they know how to. They’ve probably had older brother and their father spending time with them from the time they were real young teaching them how to catch, throw, kick, ride a bike and stuff like that. You’ve never had that and that’s why you’re behind. A lot of being able to hang with kids your age is being able to play with them. That’s what we are going to work on.”

W just wanted to be able to fit in with his peers. I started working with his basketball skills at the Y program. He was easily distracted and during the first few months it was really just about getting him to play the game with me. I worked with him on his passing, his dribbling, and eventually on his shot. Kids like to shoot from anywhere and usually too far back and so they miss a lot.

“W, remember it’s like climbing stairs. Start with the shot closest to you and the hoop. It’s just like that. Make the closest shots possible to the net and your success rate will climb. What’s important about success? It feels good and it makes you want more of it. So once you get the closest shots down then we’ll work on the shot a step or two further back.”

He was very enthusiastic but man, he could get frustrated easily. I learned to keep the sessions short and to change up the game frequently. So, we’d play around at basketball for a while and then I introduced throwing and catching a small football; one that he could handle. He loved running patterns and I was right, there was nothing wrong with his body. At first when he was running, and he was running too fast, the ball would just bounce off his chest.

“Hey... start slow and just walk the pattern. We’ll speed up gradually and it will all work out better.”

At first I just threw short passes and he began to catch the ball more times than not. Gradually increasing the distance I then introduced movement with him going out for patterns. Now patterns teach the mind through the body...patterns that are successful and isn’t life just like that...success comes from living patterns that work.

“OK...now run straight out five steps then cut left five steps and the ball will be on its way.”

Off he’d go...one, two, three, four, five...uh, left, one, two, three, four, five...and whap the ball would be right there into his hands.

“OK, well do that a few more times, then go a little faster.”

And we did, and he was getting it.

“Now, straight out again but this time go right. Now when you went straight and then left, that’s called a “down and out. When you go straight and then to the right, that

called a “down and in.” That’s when you start to the left of me. If you start on the right, then it’s the opposite, straight then left is now a down and in, and straight then right is now a down and out. Tricky, but in a week or so you’ll get it.”

Working through his body he did get it, and then other things began to happen that reinforced this.

With this success I allowed some of his peers to join us until I had three or four going out for patterns, including W. When this worked out, with W knowing that I wasn’t going to pass to him every time, but he would get his fair share, I included a few more peers and put them on defense. Soon the boys who were working on their patterns were weaving through the defense and this all boosted W self esteem and simultaneously increased his confidence that he could successfully interact with his peers. Small as he was he became pretty good on defense also. Guess what...he was becoming popular and his behavior began to calm down and mostly his peeing and crapping diminished and then extinguished. Cool.

His grandma would come to pick him up after work and I made sure that he was out there on the field with his peers playing so that she could see the progress that he was making and to have her visualize the potential of her grandson. Instead of just picking him up she would stand there and watch W play successfully and I would provide auditory input as to the process that I was using to bring him up to speed. It never hurt to provide frequent auditory and visual real life reinforcers to lock in the lessons she was trying to learn.

Each day, when we left the Y we returned home with me following them in my car. In the beginning months I was open to listening to his grandma tell me all the things that she felt that W was doing wrong. Then I started to inquire as to what was going well, you know, to introduce a bit of light into the darkness.

“It’s hard on me. My whole life nothing ever worked out. It’s just too much at times. It’s easier to know that none of this will work out so the pain isn’t so much like when you get your hopes up, and then always have them crash.”

“It’s scary to try again. And yes, it can at times become too overwhelming to keep on pushing, and then to have it collapse isn’t so much as depressing as it is a relief. The collapse is a relief because the anxiety of it coming is so stressful, that when it happens it’s a great burden off of you. But, you know, perfection isn’t our goal. Our goal is to get it to what I call “It’s good enough.” Good enough is good enough...sometimes it works and then at times it doesn’t. That’s about as good as life gets.”

Then I started to invite them to come to the local park as a family so that we could hang out and get a feeling for all being together doing a common activity. That’s when I started working with W, his mother and boyfriend on family time using baseball as the vehicle. This involvement with W’s sports skills was the first time anyone in his family had ever worked with him. I put W up at bat, I pitched, the grandma was the catcher and the boyfriend who was somewhat mobile given his leg injury standing in center field. I had a bag of tennis balls and started to slow pitch. Each time W made contact with the ball, even when it dribbled just a few feet in front of him he ran the bases laughing hysterically. He wouldn’t stop at a base but kept on running. I played like I was chasing him down, but always allowed him to score during this period of time. Eventually I began to introduce the rules as his ability and confidence began to grow. It turned out that the grandma enjoyed this as much as W. The boyfriend, being reserved and expecting to be

marginalized warmed up slowly but then really got into it, especially when it was his turn at bat.

Family time. Imagine never having family time. I mean, he did spend one-to-one time with his grandma, his dad, and infrequently with the boyfriend, but they never had done an activity together. Well they did have Thanksgiving together sometimes, but that always ended up with the grandma and her son fighting and “ruining everything.” Here’s a boy who was sexually abused, born addicted, taken away from his family and placed in foster care...was exhibiting serious emotional distress resulting in aggressive behavior and crapping and peeing on himself...lost his relationship with his mother...always being criticized and well, No Family Time...that’s what he desperately wanted...his father and his grandma to get along, to spend time with the relatives and to have some positive experience and a sense of Family. So, first step...W, his grandma and her boyfriend playing ball. When his father and his girlfriend came down to get him every two weeks, I included them in the play. So there we were...having extended family time...lots of laughter, fun, and warmth as long as we played ball. OK, a good start for W. He does have family and at times they can behave and be together. Playing baseball, (now I know why it’s called “The great American sport) a sport that brought them together and yet provided them with enough space from each other...the space between home plate, first, second and third base, and left, center and right field. Plenty of room between each of them yet they were playing together. Cool. We got on track.

What will a kid do to get his family on track? Misbehave. If it wasn’t for the kid misbehaving so badly the family would never have received any help. Most of us sneak under the radar. Sneak. Can’t see us. I don’t know if I can say it takes courage to misbehave, but yeah, maybe that’s exactly what it is.

It’s like the kid saying, “I’ll do anything so that we can get help. Being good didn’t ever get us any help. Sure I was perfect at school, at church, and in the community. No help. No matter how messed up my family is at home, if I behave outside the home, no one notices. So, stand back...here I come...poop, piss and sexual acting out. Wham. Help.”

What is misbehavior anyway except a signal that something isn’t working right? Why do we punish poor behavior when it is only a signal of a problem? Why do we believe that to pay attention to poor behavior only reinforces it? It sounds right, but is it? Of course, it’s also clear that if misbehavior is only a signal that something is wrong, then the kid is innocent and then the responsibility shifts back to where it belongs: The Parents and other connected adults. However, by extension the parents by being responsible for the problems in the home are also just signaling that something is wrong, and so the responsibility then shifts to where it really belongs: Culture and Society. However, once again Culture and Society are also signaling that something is wrong, and that shifts the responsibility for the Creator of Humanity and that’s just too much for anyone to cope with. So, let’s just say it’s no one’s fault. For me the most important realization that can be derived from this series of insights is that indeed, something is wrong and I guess Society and Culture aren’t going to jump on the problem, so I suppose it comes down to the parents and their therapeutic team that have to make the essential corrections. Of course, depending upon the age of the child, the child too needs to make an effort to contribute somewhat to the overall effort of helping the family heal.

Why do so many things sound right, but aren’t? Someone was telling me how

when playing games with their children they never let them win. They'd say, "It's important for them to learn how the real world works. No one is going to give him or her anything. (Sounds sad.) The sooner they learn that lesson the better off they'll be." I always wondered who taught them this philosophy of childrearing. Was it someone that was a successful parent? Of course when the definition of a successful parent is that of a rugged individual who made it on his or her own, then well maybe they were successful, but as a parent? It's my belief that only one out of a hundred can thrive within this philosophy of parenting. The other ninety-nine suffer through life with varying degrees of feeling inadequate.

What does a kid learn when their parent never lets them win? Do they really learn how to compete and win? Maybe, depending upon the child's personality and resilience. However it seems what they really learn is that their parents are bullies, insensitive, lacking in empathy and compassion, that they can't be trusted, and that they will be punitive should they be asked for help. Here the parent loves their child and is doing what they believe is right, and here's the child who loves their parent and yet are experiencing their parents style of parenting as demeaning, denigrating, and demoralizing. That's messed up. I mean, how would you, the reader feel always losing in the beginning of learning? Would you feel encouraged to keep on trying, or would you tend to give up and seek a way to get out of there? How would it feel never to be able to please or be pleased, for wouldn't being pleased lead one to be vulnerable, therefore open to attack?

I tried to explain this alternative view to the person telling me of his parenting style of dominance and intimidation, for that's what it feels like to a child who is never allowed to win. I understand the theory that you only learn how to fight by fighting, but no coach puts their neophyte fighter in the ring with someone who can badly damage them. No, they bring them up slowly so that their skills can match the challenge. Losing isn't a motivator, winning is. I'm not suggesting letting the kid win always, but it is critical that the parent lets them win in the beginning and then make it more challenging to continue to win. Eventually, I suppose when their skills are equal then OK, no holds barred. But for sure, it isn't healthy should the kid have a greater knack for the game and then to constantly kick their parents ass. That wouldn't be a positive outcome. Hopefully in this process the child would appreciate their parents forbearance in the early stages of learning and see that as a positive role model for when they become parents.

The kids I work with have only experience other people winning, not them. They only learned how to lose and to duck learning for learning is where the pain started.

So, when I work with a seriously dysfunctional family it's really only about the fact that the parents just don't know how to do it right. It's not really their fault. It was probably the way they were raised. What else do people do but what some one did before them. For some reason parenting is not like technology which keeps on advancing. It's my feeling that parenting is as primitive as it was in the first moment of humanity. I mean, before the apes jumped up on two feet and became "human" they must have been doing something right. They had been around for a million years or so. Since we hunked off of all four, well the whole thing has kind of declined. What ever was working as apes just seemed to have been left behind in the trees.

The families don't have a clue. They can see other people "making it," but for some mysterious reason they're not getting ahead and when they do it's not long before they slip on back. The sad part of this is not only do the parent's not have a clue but that's

what they teach their kids who will also not have a clue either. They as a family are way behind. So if the parents don't know how it works, then how are their kids going to be any different, for all the parents are teaching is failure. The skills that the kids are learning are the skills that allow them to be dysfunctional in the family for those are the skills that the parents are living. The kids learn how to be dysfunctional and even more dysfunctional than their parents; this they do in the hope of pleasing their parents. By being more dysfunctional than their parents the parents get to feel better about themselves and actually then have a positive role of trying to help their more dysfunctional child.

There are consequences to this. Unless the parents improve in their parenting and life skills any progress the child makes can become very threatening to their relationship with their parents. The more functional the kid becomes the more evident the parent's dysfunction and who wants to live with that? That's why in these families the kids often self-destruct when they reach a certain level of progress. What holds these families together is failure and the effort to overcome it. The bounty of success never enters the formulae except to be a distant goal that isn't taken too seriously. Meanwhile all the professionals are cheering them on in their hope to feel effective in their delivery of services. But never is it taken into account that their goal to help the family is viewed subconsciously by the family as the pathway to the disruption and destruction of what holds their family together...dysfunction.

Still, the parents have to be willing to try something new before their child will take the chance to try something new. The parents have to be willing to demonstrate to their child that they care enough about their child to be willing to risk being vulnerable for the family's greater good. The parents have to demonstrate some degree of success for their kids to have sufficient respect for them to follow their example.

Kids want their parents to be powerful especially when they are very young, and as they grow they want to spend time with their parents doing what adults do. When parents allow this, to share their world with the kid and to support the development of the skills to be in their world, well then the kid has a place in the world and a future that is secure and one that allows him or her to participate.

W wanted to be part of his family more than anything else. Unfortunately the only lesson that was being fully shared with W was the skills of dysfunction. His dad and his grandmother were in the midst of a major meltdown and this is what they taught W. They were also keeping W's biological mother and sister out of the picture because they were viewed as such bad influences. No credit was given them for any progress that they may have made over the years as W's father was demanding for himself. I actually was never allowed to have any contact with them and so I was never able to develop any insight as to their role in W's future. Still, to be part of his family, and though the behavior of the family was demoralizing, W had it within him to resist and to stand up and fight for his right to exist. This, at the stage of dysfunction of his family, required him to massively misbehave and so he did, and it worked. Frankly, without W's fortitude and determination this family would have sunk deep beneath the quicksand of their crazy making.

When I joined the team, W had all sorts of professionals looking in on his family. The problem was that there was no manager of the team, and so all the professionals were working independently, uncoordinated, and at times, undermining each other's effort. That's where I come in as the lowest person on the totem pole. People above me have to

stay in their own niche. I don't. I get to visit everyone and spend time with them and in doing so I become a liaison between everyone and thus the lowest has the most power to improve the situation. I get to know what everyone is doing, and I share this and in sharing it, since they rarely relate together, I can shape the reality of our effort. What I say is reasonable and has merit and so they naturally attach to it and follow my lead while all the time I support their superior position. In their hearts they want to be successful and to experience the reward of having done a good job. I don't talk of this, but that is exactly what I support in my time with them. However, should I come across a player who doesn't have a good heart, but is using their position to take advantage of W's dysfunction in order to feel good about themselves, then I guess they have to go or it just won't work out. A lot of times there is nothing I can do to "excuse" a player. However, in this case it wasn't until the third therapist was assigned to W that the team received the support it needed to make some progress. This therapist wanted to listen to me and took what I had to offer and made it the focus of therapy and when she attended the family team meetings, it was the strategy that we discussed that she put into place.

Family was the focus and positive family time was the goal. After a few months I encouraged them to make a picnic out of it when we went to the park to play ball and to let the dog loose. Having fun is therapeutic. Having fun as a family is family therapy. It improves morale and provides an element of hope that things can eventually work out. It pumps energy into the family to overcome demoralization. It comes down to, "Why do we have to be depressed in our dysfunction. Why don't we shift it to having fun digging our way out of our dysfunction? Yeah, let's all work together and dig our way out and then it's no different than playing ball as a team. Each person has their position. Each person depends upon the others. Each person gets a chance to be up at plate...fun.

Is it true that the best teams are the ones that are able to make the game fun? Is it true that allowing work to be fun improves one's motivation to go to work and to put out 100%? Does it really all come down to attitude? Well, it's my opinion that if the work has to be done, then I'm going to find a way to make it fun so that I can do it with a good energy. I remember eating dinner at a person's house who was very depressed and a bit pissed off at the world, including me. After eating the food, that night I was siiiiiick. I swore never to eat food again that was being cooked by a person who was unhappy.

I suppose that this principal applies to my work. If I can make the time with the family humorous and fun even though we are working on serious issues, then things kind of work out. So I guess that I have become a sit down comic in my work, but I'm a better stand-up comic out on the play field. Plus, I like being active. Who wants to sit all the time when working on hard stuff? Me, I like to be up and about as I do the work. Playing games or taking a hike is a great way to do just that. The whole idea that you have to sit down to be serious is a mystery. I remember getting into meditation. Now what sense does it make to seek a meditative state when your body is sitting in the most uncomfortable position with legs twisted like a pretzel, with your back and neck killing you from trying to sit straight? Even though it's supposed to help keep one focused, but then it gets to be too intense and the mind kind of short circuits as the body screams to mind, "Let go." Me, I figured this out before meditation was completely ruined for me. So no cramped sitting. Instead I got into walking meditation...walking meditation as I unscrambled my body, woofed my self erect...legs you still down there? Good. Care to carry the rest of us out of here. Ahhh. Now that's more like it. Yeah. Now,

meditation...how about climbing that hill and catch the sunset. That's meditation and the meditation that turns me on.

"Gee I thought we were making progress, then all of a sudden you don't seem to still be here. Where are you?"

"I'm here, just not with you. Tooooo much man, too much. I only got one brain. You can't just keep treating my mind like a dump...just pouring all your stuff into it. It takes time to cogitate, you know what I mean?"

Yeah, too serious, got to make it into some fun. But I guess before we get to all that fun we have to clean up enough space so that fun can be got.

"So, you're telling me that W sneaks out after you all are asleep and he gets into the internet to cruise the porno sites?"

"Yeah, you hit the nail on the head. He's sneaky."

"Still to get onto the internet, well, didn't you establish kiddy filters to prevent that?"

"Well, uhh, mmmmm, shhhh, sissssss, fffffff, tttttnt. NO"

"Gee, do I have to tell you?"

"I've got so much going on in this house; it's too much."

"Now, too much? Listen it's not really about coming down on you for the obvious, it's about getting it taken care of so that W has a chance in life. This way it's like Chutes and Ladders...up the ladder and whoops down the chute. It's not fair to him. Let's just get that taken care of today."

"I don't know how"

"I bet W knows how and your boyfriend probably knows how being that he has two teenagers, and when his son visits this weekend, he'll for sure be able to help you set it up."

"Ok, that makes it sound manageable."

"Good. Also what's going on when you see him masturbating the dog? I'm interested how this is being dealt with."

"Well, he's just a kid. We don't want to make a big deal out of it. That could traumatize him."

"I wonder if that was the input from one of his therapists, or is that kind of your own insight?"

"Probably a combination of both."

"I mean has anyone sat down with him and explained what the consequences of that can be not only on him but on the whole family should that be reported to the Child Abuse Registry on the basis of neglect. You know I'm a mandated reporter and if I should see him doing that, I'd have to call it in. When you see him do it, is not the time to correct him, but do redirect him to another "activity." Pick the right time, probably when things are going relatively well. It is important to talk seriously to him soon so that you have acted responsibility as a parent and that he has the chance to correct himself before another such incident occurs. The same goes for his exposing himself at school and peeing on kids while he is using the communal urinal there. It's not about traumatizing him, he was already traumatized when his mother sexually abused him. The issue can be worked on over time, but the acting out has to stop very soon. So I'll speak to the therapist about this as well as the Y staff, and you have to make it clear to him that it's unhealthy for him to behave in this manner. (I did follow up with the therapist and the Y

staff and they were open to placing boundaries into place. It was my job to teach W's grandma how to set boundaries in a non-confrontational manner.) Not doing anything and just ignoring this behavior to get your attention prevents his call for help from being responded to. If no one responds to this behavior, he will escalate it until no one has the choice but to respond. We don't want him doing that."

"OK, I'll sit him down and let him hear about it."

"In fact, let me do that after you pick him up today so I can role model how to speak about it in a serious but emotionally safe manner."

When we all returned from the Y program I asked W to join his mother, her boyfriend, and myself in the family room.

"Can we go to the park soon?"

"Sure, but before we do that, and I really enjoy hanging out at the park with you, we need to look at something that is confusing me."

"Can't we do that later? After we come back?"

"I know it would be more fun to go right away, however we'll go as soon as you help me understand what's going on. I'm concerned that there is some stuff going on that can cause you and your family a great deal of trouble and I need your help coming up with an answer."

"What?"

"I'm hearing that you know how to get onto the internet by yourself."

"I've been doing that for a long time."

"Well, I'm impressed with that. Kids need to know how to get onto the internet; it's part of our life. I guess my concern is that there's stuff you get on while everyone is awake, and then there's the stuff you get on when everyone is sleeping. It's the stuff when everyone is sleeping that is a problem."

"I don't use the internet after my mom goes to sleep."

"Oh, I guess that I'm confused. Someone is getting into some porno sites late at night and it could be someone else in the house, yet if it is you, then that's got to stop."

"I never use the internet after my mom (W call his grandma mom.) goes to sleep."

"Right, that's what you said. Still let me share what can happen. Kids do access the porno sites. Most boys want to even if they can't. Still, doing so successfully can result in your grandma getting into a lot of trouble. She's the one responsible for your welfare, and it's against the law for a parent to allow a ten year-old child to open up those sites. It's difficult for a kid to be unaffected by what they see, and many of the porno programs show stuff that appears to be a turn on, and I suppose it is, but also it opens up children to be responsive to people who would take advantage of an innocent child, and the child may not think that what they are doing is bad for them, especially when it feels good. Still, it just leads to a great deal of trouble. So, what I am saying is watching a porno site is unhealthy for children, and you're a child, and so it would be best if you chose not to look in to those sites.

W was turning redder and redder as I kept speaking about this. Still, he was a tough one.

"I told you that I don't watch those porno sites."

"I'm glad to hear that. It's good to learn that you are smart and wouldn't do something that would hurt you, even if it seemed attractive. I admire you. I also know you want your grandma to learn how to help you grow up into a healthy person. So, I'm

sure she will have more to say about it between this visit and the next time I see you.”

“Can we go to the park now?”

“Sure, I know we’d all like to.”

Another take on this. “So, crapping and peeing at ten in places other than in a urinal or a toilet. Got to stop. How’s a boy ever going to have positive peer relationships when he is peeing and crapping on himself? No, that’s not going to work out well, not at all.”

“So, let’s take a look at soaking himself while he is asleep.”

“Every night he just pees and soaks his bed. He’s ten years-old and still doing it. We’ve taken him to doctors, they say it’s all psychological.”

“Maybe it is. But still tell me how have you been trying to help him.”

“We tell him to go pee before he goes to sleep.”

“How’s that working out?”

“We just told you, it isn’t”

“Right, so what you think is the right thing to do, telling him to pee before he gets into bed, well, do you actually know if he does that. Go pee”

“Well he goes to the bathroom.”

“So how do you know that he has actually peed?”

“We hear the toilet flush.”

“Hmmm. I wonder if that’s good hard evidence?”

“Well what are we supposed to do? Stand in there with him while he pees?”

“Maybe not, but I would tell him before he flushes the toilet to come get you to show you that he has.”

“Will he do that?”

“Maybe if he wants to start to have peer relationships. I mean, why don’t you tell him that there would be no way for him to have a friend over or to spend the night at a friend’s should he continue to pee in his bed. I know that he wants to have friends.”

“Well, that’s just one more thing I’ll have to do along with everything else.”

“Yeah, parenting W is a chore. I wonder what is the best part of being his parent?”

“Well, its fun to be with him when I’m not having to tell him what to do.”

“Like what do you two enjoy doing?”

“We like to shop together and to make cookies and things.”

“Great. I’m pleased to hear that you two can enjoy time together.”

“He likes it when we cuddle and watch TV together.”

“Sounds very nurturing and comforting.”

“It is. It’s also that way for me too. He gets his pj’s on and I have my nightgown on, and he leans on me or lays his head in my lap and we just watch TV together. I find that very comforting” (I’m wondering about a ten year-old boy who is acting out sexually and who looks about six laying with his head on her lap and cuddling and I can’t help but to connect this to how his mother used him in a sexual manner in close to the same posture. Hmmm, and being permissive and feeling encouraged by the therapist not to set limits to stop him from accessing the porno sites in order to prevent him from experiencing guilt and trauma. Man, what a maze.)

I glance over at her boyfriend while she is relating this intimacy with W, and I can see from his face it is deeply upsetting for him to hear this. (Hey, that’s my position. Hey

W, get out of my position. I'm supposed to be the one who gets to do that.) He doesn't say anything, just sits there and stews and she's totally oblivious to how this must feel to him. Maybe there's more to why her boyfriend has distanced himself from W. She's kind of has this set it up to put W into conflict with him. Wow, this is some mess.

This isn't to suggest that anything is happening between W and his grandma. Then again it doesn't have to be acted out as the positioning itself can reinforce subconscious feelings. There is a similarity that runs through all my client's single moms/grandmas as well as married mother's who are in control of the family. These women share in their common poor relationships with men and they have a great deal of conflict with their sons. There also seems to be a component of sexual dominance and manipulation. Sometimes it is more overt and other times more subtle yet for the boy it is very confusing and affects the emotional influence over behavior. In some cases the mother is in the bathroom handing a towel or soap to their sons while they shower as is the case with W and his grandma. She related that this is to help her assure that he actually is taking a shower, or is it also he makes trouble for her by not always taking a shower so that she is drawn to be in the bathroom when he showers. The reason for this as the mother's often tell it is that their sons are afraid to shower alone. In Z's situation there was his fondling of his mother, not with the overt intention of sexual interaction, but as a comforting behavior. With M, his mother had a My Space site that of course M found, and her personal photo had her in a negligee posing in a seductive posture. M had then taken a photo of himself which he placed on his My Space site showing him exposed with a large hunting knife hanging out of his underwear. Other kids I worked with also have had frequent and overly familiar "cuddling" moments with their moms. Again, I'm not suggesting that there is sexual intimacy of the normal kind, but it is essentially sexual and it is intimate and affects both the adult and the kid.

To dislike men and yet to be seducing their male children and not even knowing it. Then when the boy seeks out that substitute for nurturing, she gives some but then takes it away and attaches that withdrawal to the consequence of not pleasing her with a positive attitude regardless of her negative behavior. Attracting her son, subconsciously feeling guilty then rejecting him...how is that going to affect his perception of girls? This is a lot to work with, and the mother's are not in therapy and I'm not allowed to provide any input into this dynamic. Well, I kind of do when I work with the boys. Mainly I speak of limits and boundaries and the need to accept the separation from mom that comes with growing up.

Does it help? Not really. At least not right away. That's where the therapist steps in, if they do, to open up that level. I guess if they do open up that door and then my effort to put all of this into a "reality," then I suppose it would be helpful. However, the therapists never tell me what they're doing in therapy as they feel that it has to do something with their rules of confidentiality. I mean they may say they will speak with W about the subject, but they won't give me any feedback as to their progress or lack of progress or any other insight that may assist me to help W. However, of course, I'm responsible for informing the therapist everything about what I do, and I want to because that's how a team works. But because of the ethics rules, it's viewed as a violation of client confidentiality should they share with me what I need to know. Oh well.

I started to work with the Y staff in regards to W taking a poop while there.
"Yeah, we just have him change his clothes."

“That’s good, still I feel that we have to do a bit more. I mean the outcome of him crapping himself is that it lowers his ability to fit in with his peers. I mean who else is crapping their pants at ten years of age? His peers think he’s kind of developmentally delayed, too put it politely. The peers don’t say DD, they just say “retarded.” Not the correct or nice way to put it, but that’s what they say and that’s what W hears.

“We’re working with his peers not to make fun of him?”

“That’s really helpful. You know, I’m working with him on stuff he needs to improve on, like his sports skills, his social skills, and well, he’s got to take responsibility for this crapping thing or he’ll never get to fit in. So, I would like you to set up a schedule for him to go the bathroom, even when he says he doesn’t have to go. Also, should he crap himself, then he must know that he won’t be able to participate in any of the off-campus activities that he really likes such as when you all go to Raging Waters or to the beach. This isn’t punishment, instead it is just the way it is when a kid can’t manage to choose to get to the toilet in time...the natural consequence is that no one wants him to come on trips because who wants to be sitting next to him when he dumps and who wants to help him clean up when he does. There’s nothing wrong with him physically that makes him lose control. Also, I would like you to inform his grandma that you will no longer take responsibility for getting him to clean himself up. I would like you to inform her that she will have to come from work to take care of him. It seems from what you are telling me that he only craps himself in the hour or so before his grandma comes to pick him up after work. So, in my opinion this is really just something that W does to mess with his grandma for things he feels she’s doing to him. Can we agree to do this?”

“Yes. That sounds great. We’ve wanted to do this but just haven’t. So we’ll talk to W and to his grandma about these new rules and put it into effect this week.”

“Great. It wonderful to work with such a good group. Thank you.”

He did crap himself a few more times, and threw a tantrum each time when he wasn’t allowed to get on the bus with his peers to go to special activities. Still, after that...no more crapping at the Y program. It’s great to be so good at what I do...Or was I just lucky?

I began to notice that when we were all at the park working on his sports skills that his grandma was hyper-vigilant and micro-managing everything that W did.

“You got to loosen up. He’s got to have some space to be a kid.”

He was climbing the backstop at the baseball diamond.

“W, get down from there. You’ll get yourself killed.”

“He’s a kid. He’s like a monkey. He’s not going to get hurt. Let him have some fun, that’s what kids are supposed to be doing.”

He was exploring along some bushes that bordered the field.

“W, get back here. A snake will get you.”

“Come on. He’s going to be all right. We’re standing right here. There aren’t any snakes or there would be a sign warning us of that. It’s good for him. Besides the dog is with him. Let’s just see if he doesn’t survive. Any way, after all, you keep joking about how wonderful your world would be without him. Hey, this is your big chance. A snake grabs him and runs off with him...you’re free.”

“Funny aren’t you?”

“Me?”

She not only micro-managed W, she did the same with her boyfriend and his son.

She always looked for what could go wrong, always finding the bad in the good.

“So, how is this going to work out? It must be a terrible strain to feel that so many things could go wrong. It’s kind of impossible to relax even when you have the time to do so. Being worried all the time isn’t good for your health.”

“You’re right. I just can’t help myself. It’s because of all the terrible things that happened to me when I was young. I just live in a constant state of fear.”

Meanwhile she was working for the Feds identifying all the illegal immigrants that ran with gangs so that they could be rounded up and deported, thus making our world that much safer. Kind of the perfect empowering job...to work deep within the federal building, completely safe and causing so much to happen that must have affected these bad guys families in some way that couldn’t have been good for their kids and wives. But then, running with gangs, well, they deserve no better and their families don’t either...or so goes the rhetoric. Talk about deep seated pathology and the power that one can have. Wow...scary.

I began to meet with her boyfriend for lunch; really to attempt to see if he could be someone in the family to replace me when I eventually had to stop seeing W. As the adult male I was hoping that he would start to take W to the ball field without me to work on his sports skills. I also wanted him to spend some one-to-time with W, maybe go out for something to eat, or to the beach, or to a movie. But no. He wouldn’t.

“Are you kidding? You know that she will make it impossible and if I do she’ll find something to criticize. Hell, I can’t even go out with a friend for a beer without her calling me repeatedly on my cell phone. ‘What are you doing? What are you talking about? Who else is there? When are you coming back?’ I mean it just makes going out to spend some time to get away from that scene torture.”

“That sounds rough. So I wonder what it is that keep you living there?”

“Money. I need a place to stay. My money is all tied up right now.”

“That makes sense. So how long have you been with her?”

“About twelve years.”

“Can’t be just the money then. Twelve years is a long time.”

“It used to be better before W came to live with us. I just keep thinking that things will get back to that time, but it never does.”

“I see that you all are living only on the ground floor, yet there is a built out full floor basement with bedrooms and bathrooms. How come that area isn’t being used, so you can at least get some more space from each other?”

“She won’t allow anyone to use it. I mean she used to let her younger son, W’s dad’s brother use it but he “abused” the space, and now she just doesn’t want the expense of keeping it up. I told her that she should rent it out and take in some money so that the cash position of the family would be better, but she won’t.”

“That makes it tough, huh?”

“Tough? More like hell.”

“So, you know, it’s not good for W to spend all of his time in the house. I see that she won’t let him go out into the neighborhood. Always fearful that someone is going to want to kidnap him. Boy, that would be a surprise for the kidnapper. What in the hell have I got here as W jumps up and down on him. Just kidding. Anyway, what I’m saying is that he needs to spend time with you and get away from his grandma, and so do you...need to get some time to get away from her. W is fun to be with. He’s got a great

sense of humor.”

“I have no intention of getting closer to W. I really want to leave this situation, and when my money situation improves I’m going to get my own place. She does a lot better when I don’t live with her. When she has me she treats me poorly. I’ve separated from her before. That’s when she’s on her best behavior. Man its great when she wants to get me back. She’ll do anything then. But once back in the home. Slam! Down come the barriers, and all that personal stuff starts to flow over me. No, I’m going to get out of here and I don’t want to hurt W by allowing our relationship to get tight.”

Wow. Poor W. Caught between a rock and a hard spot. Squish, and so now I kind of get an idea about the squishing between his butt cheeks as he dumps when she comes to get him after work. He’s making a statement.

“You didn’t get it? Well, let’s see if you can also ignore my stink. No, I didn’t think so.”

So, no boyfriend to engage. I didn’t quit lobbying. I kept meeting him every once in a while to just recruit him. Never happened. He did however continue to come with us to the park to play ball. He liked that. When he finally recuperated from his surgery he and a friend bought a fast food outlet somewhere up in L.A. and that took him legitimately out of the home for the whole day and long into the night. He finally figured out how to keep away from the home scene.

My relationship with W kept improving and so did his sports skills. In the beginning like I said he wouldn’t focus on the skills, but eventually he began to get it and his dribbling improved, his passing mostly got there, and he could make shots up to the free throw line. His football skills in catching and throwing also improved. In fact he got quite good. He struggled with running patterns at first. It takes discipline, but you know, he eventually got it and so when he played with his peers he was right out there and feeling really good about himself. With this improvement his feeling of inferiority diminished, which led to less reactive aggressive behavior with peers as this defense was needed less and less. He actually stopped crapping on himself with the help of the Y staff to remind him to go to the boy’s room in the afternoon and thus was able to go with his peers on the special outings. He also began to accept verbal cues to pay attention and with his ability to discipline himself to run the patterns in football he then began to accept the rules of the games he played. It wasn’t long before he was like the judge out there calling out all the infractions...that wasn’t really helpful but it was good that he was accepting the boundaries that were there to help kids get along.

I kept after the therapist to work with the grandma and W’s dad on their relationship as this was still a very sore spot for everyone and slowed down the work that we were all trying to do to help W. It really always comes down to family. It isn’t about getting our way. It’s about doing what’s best for the family. Man, this is a hard one to get across. I mean everyone agrees in theory, but the triggers, shoot, they’re all hair triggers; just one wrong word, or a wrong look and kaboom. Off to the races.

I started on positive communication skills especially the skill of listening. While the therapist was meeting with the grandma and the boy’s father I was working on ways of implementing the good thoughts that were supposed to come from the therapy session with the two of them. Unfortunately it didn’t work out that way. After their therapy session we scheduled to all get together for family meetings. Man, they’d arrive back at the house all hopped up with anger, frustration, and fire. Step back. She’d come in

fuming. He'd come in with brows creased, lips turned down, and hands in a fist. His girlfriend would go up to him to sooth him. Grandma would just go into her room saying she needed to be by herself just for a while. The dog would pick up on their vibes and go hyper. W would start to act goofy and not listen. I guess doing therapy isn't all love and happiness. It seemed to just open up all the pain and hurt that was pent up and by the time the session was over it was in full eruption...no closure happening here.

A tough assignment for the therapist. There's really no relationship in place with either of them and to bring them together, which was my great idea...well that's the limits of the system. No regular therapy for the parents, only 45 minutes once a month. That's the system. Ain't no system at all. Just a mess. I mean how in the hell can things really improve unless each of the players have their own therapist and with the agreement that the therapists would be free to communicate with each other to get a game plan together and then to put it into operation with some hope of success? Nope. Not going to be that way. So, from polite to hostile. Still, because of their craziness they needed each other to keep their scene going, so they never did cut each other off regardless of the verbal threats. That's the cohesive feature of dysfunction. No one is going to let go of even the lowest level of relationship if that's all you have ever known. Isn't that what they say that, "It's better to keep what we know than risk something new that we don't know." Actually, it's more like, "It's better to keep what we know than risk having nothing at all." I can see their point of view.

It must all be some sort of genetic and instinctual thing. Logic and reason, no. Emotions, yes! That gray matter was a late addition and probably the older brain feels that it was invaded and conquered...or yeah. Check this insurgency out. "You may be on the outer level but we run the home scene."

That's where my personal relationship with W and his family comes in. "See, you can have a good time in a meaningful positive relationship. Now that each of you has experienced this with me, why not be willing to experience the same pleasure with each other?" A good question. Hope that one day they will discover the answer.

Does a father who messed up when he was younger have the right to be a father when he has matured? Does a mother who has picked up her grandson after her son's mess up have the obligation of releasing his son when he improves? Should a grandson be an emotional substitute for a detached boyfriend? My goodness. So many interesting questions.

The dad, well I had to admire him. He was relentless in his drive to get his son back. He made every effort to cooperate what with the coming down from LA to make the meetings and he kept talking. He and his girlfriend made plans to get married and they then wanted W to come live with them and her son; like a real family. It made sense, but grandma wasn't ready to let go. She kept digging to find the bad in the good, yet to give her respect she was working hard to make her relationship with W better. She chose to start using the interventions and instead of standing over him 24/7 she began to give him some space. He still had absolutely no friends and never therefore had any where to go to get out from under her. Still, he began to calm down, and then, grandma and his dad would go after each other and send all that good work into the toilet.

You know the whole therapy thing is voluntary. None of it is court mandated in our area of work. There are court mandated programs for those who end up in court for child abuse if they want to get their kid back. But in general, it all depends upon the

willingness and the ability of the family to benefit from therapy. This means there is no way to “force” the interventions into place. It’s all about my ability to form a bonding and binding relationship with the players that leads to the family choosing to accept the interventions and to put them into their daily life. It takes a lot of connection to reformulate a sufficient degree of safety and security in the relationship for trust to reemerge. Trust has been gathering dust for some many years, and what kind of relationship can you have by anticipating that at any moment it will dissolve. No trust, no taking of chances and that’s what’s needed...the willingness to trust me so that they become willing to take a chance and check out what I’m suggesting. Best is that they have the chance to check it out as I role model it in my relationship with W and with them. Once they experience it, they begin to kind of want it too. It’s a good form of empowerment and everyone needs a sense of power. In these families too much of that power is negative...still when there is some positive power, “Well, just maybe I’ll take a taste. Yummmmm. Can I have another little taste?”

Meanwhile all of these kind of terrible things are happening; just short of child abuse and its just kind of deteriorates to the edge of being like a terminal disease, but never quite crossing the line. Mental illness is like a parasite that saps the host’s life force, but not quite enough to kill it. It a form of mutually irritating symbiosis, where each brings the other to the point of completely falling apart, but then as they start to disintegrate, the partner reaches out a helping hand and pulls the other back from the abyss only to repeat the cycle endlessly.

So grandma drives W into crapping his pants, peeing in the night, sexual acting out, aggressive behavior, hyperactivity, oppositional behavior, put on medication, threaten residential placement, screams about how horrible it is to live with W, and then refuses to allow his father to take him to his home...and then...and then just when it becomes totally hopeless, reaches out for help through therapy. Once therapy is in place she then rejects the therapist’s and the support team’s efforts to introduce positive parenting skills and claims, “I have problems too,” refuses to cooperate with therapy and increasingly frustrates the team by refusing to support the proposed interventions...all the time pointing the finger at W...and then points the finger at the therapist and gets a new one...and then well, she never did that with me because I was her ally and had a relationship with her, her boyfriend, his son, and W...and she wasn’t willing to see W ignite should she attempt to also get rid of me.

I always treated her well regardless of her behavior for to lose the relationship with her would mean to leave W isolated. I got to hand it to her. She accepted that boundary and in her heart she didn’t want to destroy W, only keep him around as another chance to prove to herself that she could be a good mom...even though she was his grandma. At some point I began to insist that while I was with the family that W be encouraged to start to call her grandma, and for the therapeutic team to also refer to her as W’s grandma, and not call her his mom as she wanted to view herself. It was interesting that she didn’t really fight this. In fact she wanted to just be his grandma, you know, the grandma that just gives gifts and sweets. She was trapped in her role of his mother...but she really wasn’t and deep down inside she wanted out of this role. Calling her “grandma” was the first step to get the roles straight. He had a mom. He had a sister who was living with his biological mom. She wanted a relationship with W, but grandma hadn’t allowed it so far. So, next was to lobby for W’s sister to be able to visit. This

happened during one of the visits that W had with his dad. Toward the end of the time I was with the family he had his daughter meet with W without getting permission from the grandma. It kind of worked out and then there was a visit with her with her Grandma and the family and this was the beginning of something healthy.

I was with the family for about a year, and eventually I couldn't justify continuing because I could not help the family make any further progress. Once the grandma's boyfriend refused to spend more time with W, who in his mind was supposed to be with them only as long as W's dad was in jail, I had no one else to turn to. With the grandma refusing to allow W and his dad to reunite...it just finally plateaued. For sure W was doing much better as a result of the time spent with him especially at the Y after school program where he had straightened up and had formed a number of relationships with peers. I had to inform the family that I would have to stop services within a month.

To my amazement grandma signed up W for a Karate class and W immediately bonded with the teacher and became one of their best students. This connection became a substitute for my relationship with him and so when I stopped it wasn't so difficult for him and for me. A year later I heard that grandma finally relented and allowed W to move in with his father. Great outcome. Sometimes it just really starts to work once I get out of the way. You know, all that I worked toward sometimes can't emerge until the presence of the teacher is eliminated.

6. A

I don't only work with kids that live in their home. There's a whole crew of kids that because of child abuse are removed from their homes and placed for a time at the county's children's home. It's a temporary placement where the child stays until the family can be reunified, or if that will take a long time, then the placement will end when the child is placed in foster care or a group home. A had been at the county home for a while and there was talk of him being placed back in foster care where he came from. In his case he had been in the home and then placed in foster care so when I met him he had been brought back to the county home because of A's bizarre behavior. It was the normal agreement between the county home and foster care families that should the match not work out, then the child would be returned. A had been missing and when the search succeeded in locating him he was found standing on the roof of the home making like a rooster. Maybe at the moment he was a rooster because when he "flew" off the roof he landed safely. The foster home itself was a special place as it housed nearly thirty severely disabled youth and young adults for which no other placement could be found. I guess the lady and her husband who ran the place were also quite special in their willingness to take on this challenge and the county and the private sector worked together to expand the house and provide money to hire the staff so that it could safely accommodate this group. A's becoming a chicken was just one of a number of transformations that he was able to achieve and because the staff could not assure his safety, well it was just too freaky.

He was about ten when I met him. This was my first client at the county home so after I showed my ID I had to become registered, photographed and provided with another ID badge. Then I was pointed to the door to the facility. No one offered to show me around and I wasn't provided with a guide. Instead I was told to just ask anyone where the Jr. Boys cottage was located. OK. I'm an independent sort of guy, no problem. Yeah, I found my way to his unit, called a cottage, actually because it really was a cottage. Cudos to the county for instead of building a large institutional setting for all the children, they had built cottages with nice landscaping and designed the cottages after that of the seven dwarves in the Disney movie Snow White. They did this to minimize the trauma for the kids who were removed from their homes. There was an infant cottage, an early childhood cottage, a pre-teen cottage for siblings called Jr. Sibs., a pre-teen cottage for each gender called Jr. Boys and Jr. Girls, and an adolescent cottage for each gender, called Adolescent Boys and Adolescent Girls. The design of the cottages was somewhat inappropriate for the adolescent youth, you know, a dwarf cottage? The kids lived two to a bedroom with about twenty kids in each cottage. There were other buildings such a cafeteria, a common playroom with video games, ping pong, and two billiard tables as well as a swimming pool, play fields, and a gym which was for indoor sports and for assemblies for this or that such as movies, and holidays, etc. There was also a separate county library and a county school for the kids.

Anyway, once I was identified and badged, I made it to the Jr. Boys Cottage and announced myself to a staff who kind of ignored me. That wasn't unusual for the staff at the county home. They definitely had attitude. A large part of my work, just like it is when working with parents, is to form a relationship with the staff. Because the staffing is always changing due to the scheduling of 24 hour care, it wasn't often that the same

staff or combination of staff would be working at the same time each week. This made it challenging because I visited the kid three times a week at the same hour of the day. So, the result was that there may be one person of the five person team that was the same, but yeah, sometimes maybe more, or once in a while no one the same.

Being ignored is part of the test. How do you deal with being ignored? Do I cop an attitude? Do I just kind of sit down until someone comes over? Do I just sit there for the whole time because no one cares to come over? Do I just read the journal, the daily report by staff on each kid, to get a handle on A's report for how he's been doing that day and the days since I last spent time with him? It just depends upon who's on that day. Anyway, it was my first visit and I had arranged to meet the kid's therapist at the unit so that he could introduce me to the staff and to A. He arrived, and the staff also ignored him. He saw me and greeted me with the friendliness that makes my work that much easier. He raised his eyebrows when I wondered about not being greeted by the staff. We sat for a while reading the journal. It was full of episodes all resulting in physical aggression.

The care of children is directed by an interesting system of care. The children's home and it's staff are all part of Social Services, but the children's therapist team is a part of the Health Care Agency, Children's and Youth Services; that's the team that I work with. Social Services and the Health Care Agency being two separate entities struggle to communicate with each other. This is typical. Typical anywhere. So, anything that Health Care Agency's staff has to offer is subordinate to the system of care of Social Services and though both agencies are part of the County's System of Care, well it's a territorial thing. Anyway, because the therapist had been around long enough to get some respect he asserted himself and inquired as to where A was and was told that he was in his room, having just returned from school.

We walked over to his bedroom and peeked in through the window placed on the doors of all the bedrooms so that staff can observe. He didn't appear to be in his room, so we opened the door and walked in. The rooms are very sparse typically with two beds and a two closets for the clothes. There is no other furniture provided such as a desk and chair. The beds are bolted to the floor. This way it was explained, there is nothing to break or throw should the kid get aggressive. This mentality of keeping the bedroom stripped of any comfort while in the minds of those who determine these things is designed so to minimize ammunition for aggression, at least in my mind this is a trigger for that very aggression. No posters on the wall, no comfortable chair to sit in, no desk, no lamp, no radio...no, no, not quite a prison cell, but the room is no bigger than one and just as stark. True, true...no bars, but no privacy either. No, it's not nearly as bad as a cell. I don't know why I made that comparison. It just, well, these kids were removed from their homes not because of anything they did, rather it was a result of being abused, and yet they were being treated as delinquents...not good, as K would say.

Okay, A was supposed to be in his room, but he wasn't or was he? We then heard a kind of a giggle which seemed to be coming from within the room but from where? His closet. The therapist and I played a game of I wonder where A is, which brought more giggles from the closet. So, the therapist opened it up, but there was no kid in it.

"Hey, I thought I heard something from this closet but there's no kid in the closet, so how could that be? The therapist closed the closet door, but as it was closing this just brought more giggles. This time when the therapist opened the door he looked up and

there on the high shelf was a small face grinning down. A had somehow climbed up onto the shelf which I would have sworn was too high for such a maneuver and was too shallow to hold even a small kids body. But there he was.

“Hi A. What you up to huh?”

“Just taking a nap.”

“Ok, I want to introduce your new coach, who is very cool and is looking forward to spending time with you.”

“Can he take me to shoot pool?”

“We’ll see. We have to talk to staff first to see if you have earned enough points for playing pool. Anyway, come on down and say hello to your coach.

So he unwound his curled up body and kind of snake like slithered off the shelf, twisting his body to get a foot on the side of the closet and leveraged his way down. Amazing dexterity. The shelf was no more than a foot high from the top of the closet. Great hiding spot. A bit dark though when the closet door was closed as it had been when we came into the room, except maybe for a small crack. It seemed that was his spot when he needed to get away from everyone and feel safe. Hmmm. A womb closet. I can dig that. I could use one of those myself. A has already become my teacher.

He came down, but wouldn’t relate to me and wouldn’t make eye contact. He did interact with his therapist. This boy had been through it. He was from Russia. His mom had been an alcoholic while pregnant and continued her habit afterwards. She had another baby, A’s brother. Because her health wasn’t good she became hospitalized and then after being released was unable to care for her sons. They ended up in one of those institutional orphanages. I saw a documentary on PBS or maybe 60 Minutes in which they brought the viewer into one of those orphanages. One attendant for maybe fifty young ones. No real human contact, no warmth, no sense of nurturing. Stark walls. No toys. Many of them suffering from untreated physical disabilities and spent their time in large cribs. Orphan brokers got a hold of A and “sold” him to a Christian Agency who then placed him with a couple from Mexico. He and his younger brother then were shipped there passing through the United States on the way to the adopting family. A’s problems were too severe so the family decided to keep A’s brother but returned A to the Christian Agency who then found another family, but this time in California. This didn’t work out either and he was then placed in the County home. From there he eventually was placed with the foster family who fostered the kids that no one else would take.

As described before, they were fostering close to thirty kids. A philanthropic group had “added on” to their house to accommodate the numbers of unplaceable children that they cared for. A’s behavioral problems didn’t go away. It was felt that he was becoming psychotic and was having delusions and after becoming a chicken and flying up to the roof of the house one too many times to crow for the whole neighborhood, the foster family returned A to the County Children’s Home. He had also become aggressive with the caretakers and some of his foster family, so it was just too much for him to remain in the foster home.

When I started with A he had been living at the county home for longer than was really permitted, but special permission had been granted and he was kind of stuck there. How can you place a kid that turns into a chicken at times? I have to compliment the decision makers in regards to A in that they hadn’t given up on him and chose not to have him permanently placed in a State Hospital, although he was hospitalized locally a few

times.

A had the room to himself. No one could live with him given his behaviors. My job as usual was to work with him to keep him from having to go to a higher level of placement which would be either a State Hospital or an out-of-state residential school which had behavioral programs that definitely limited the behavioral outlets that kids like A demonstrated. If possible, my work would lead to the possibility that he could be reunited with the foster family that he had come from. He called all of the other kids living in that foster home, "My brothers."

The next time I visited him he was on bedroom arrest. I am kind of kidding. They don't have bedroom arrest, but he was being limited to his bedroom because of some kind of earlier misbehavior at school. Well, on the other hand I'm not really kidding. I have the philosophy that you don't punish kids who have emotional problems. I mean, yeah they have behaviors that can be hurtful to themselves and others and it is important to limit those extreme behaviors so that they don't cause real damage. That's what the short term hospitalization is for. But when they don't follow instructions, or get overwhelmed and walk out of a room, or yell at someone, well there are just short circuiting, and I'm not sure that punishing them for what they can't control at that moment is therapeutic or even just effective. That's kind of where the therapist and the kind of work that I do comes in. We are there to teach the kid how to take their frustration and anger and learn how to channel it into less aggressive outlets which hopefully one day transitions to productive outlets.

"Yeah, hitting him felt good, and so did breaking the chair." I can understand that. Still to me that's kind of like dessert and when you go for the dessert all the time then you become obese and that's kind of where you are at. You're carrying a ton of bad feelings and it's hurting your health. "Man, you got to go on a diet and exercise a lot more. Don't keep eating those bad feelings, you're just going to get too heavy to even be able to get up if you want and get out of here. You don't want to stay here, do you?"

Another aspect of the behavioral model that they use at the home is to carry forward the punishment to other areas of programming. So, if a kid misbehaves at school then he has consequences back at the cottage. Misbehaving at school can result in having to do "much more homework" than normal so that he misses his play time at the gym. Or if he messes up at school and even should he be well behaved at the cottage, then he still has consequences after school. Or, if he messes up in the morning but then has a perfect day, instead of rewarding the perfect time, he is given negative consequences later in the day, such as having to go to bed early. It's my feeling that this only generates frustration and demoralizes the kid to the point when they start to think, "Why try. If I mess up once, it just messes up the whole day." Some behaviors aren't even accounted for until the end of the week. Say the kid messes up on Monday morning and Tuesday night, and then has a perfect day on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Too bad, can't go to the outside activity on Saturday or the baseball game on Sunday afternoon between the Angels and the Yankees. What does this do for the kid? Absolutely nothing. It doesn't help them develop any of the skills that can help them to manage their anger and frustration, which by the way is fully justified. It's my belief that any consequences are best served immediately and for a short term.

"Swearing when upset is understandable but it isn't acceptable. After all we're working on positive communication skills. So please take the next five minutes and write

out another possible way of responding to the frustration that would be more positive.”

This approach is immediate, is short term, acknowledges the kid’s feeling and redirects him so that he can get back on the correct path. Compared to losing privileges ten hours later that only results in confusion and resentment, it’s obvious...but actually it isn’t.

Example 1: “What do you mean I can’t go to the Angel game? I have been behaving well.”

“Yes, you have and we’re proud of you. However back on Tuesday, five days ago you messed up once at school and well given our behavioral system, that prevents you from having the privilege of joining your peers at the game. I hope you think about this outcome the next time you feel like swearing.”

Example 2: “Well A, I know that you are upset about not being able to be with your foster family. Being upset is fine. But you can’t act out your pain and sorrow. No acting out. Instead you need to speak to staff about your feelings and you have to be mature about this and behave yourself. Remember, being upset is Okay, but acting it out definitely isn’t. That just get’s you in trouble.

Well, nice words and even some of the sentences could be viewed as therapeutically imbued, however...My goodness. Is this at all real? Again, Hello to the Universe...what’s the difference between kids that are gangbangers and these kids who are usually their victims and for some reason beyond real world experience, are being treated like the perpetrators of their own abuse. Okay, ok. Enough? Never enough.

When I looked through the door window he was putting together a Lego construct. A was on a 24 hour 1:1 staff watch, so that outside his door his 1:1 was sitting just kicking back and rapping with other staff. When I entered the bedroom the only place to sit, being there are no chairs was on his bed and so quietly and without greeting him I just sat down on the far end, nearest the door and watched him. He doesn’t greet me, I’m invisible...it’s a game.

He had the instructions out. It was for a jet fighter plane. He seemed to be able to read the instructions and was tearing through the pile of Lego pieces looking for the next part. Each time he needed a part he had to hunt through the pile. After sitting there for a while and being ignored, or I wasn’t being ignored because I was invisible...and also, maybe it wasn’t that I was invisible, it could have been he wasn’t in the same world as I was. Anyway, without asking, for I wasn’t there, was I, I just slowly started to sort the pieces from the pile that were closest to me into groups of similar parts. At first he ignored or couldn’t see the pieces that I had separated, choosing or just not seeing them and instead each time he’d go back to the diminishing pile each time for the next part. At some point his hand halted over the larger pile and then as if by some hidden force, his hand moved and he began to pick up pieces from the separated piles that I had made. This of course made the assembly much quicker and easier for him. I still hadn’t said a word to him, just waiting for him to reach out first. When he had it fully assembled he turned to me.

“Do you know what this is?”

“Kind of looks like a fighter.”

“It is. Do you want to see it fly?”

“Sure.”

So he tossed/flew it across the room where it hit the wall and disintegrated. He

found that really funny and started to laugh. OK, funny, so I started to laugh along with him. We then picked up all the pieces, and together started to separate them into piles of similar pieces. Then we worked together to quickly reassemble the plane and then whap back into the wall, pieces flying off in all directions. We did this three or four more times, then put it together once more and then he put it on his window sill.

What a great way to make a connection. A had a mind of his own if not his own world that he could step into and out of sometimes at will. If he didn't get what he wanted he wouldn't hesitate to head into his own world except in order to get there it seemed that he had to go through a ritual that was something like this. Not going to give me what I need or want, watch this disappearing act. He then leap into an accelerating tantrum, kind of like shifting through the gears of a car. He's start off by refusing to follow the directive. Let's say he was working on a Lego construct and a staff came into his room and told him he had to stop for some reason or other. He wouldn't make eye contact, just keep on putting together what he was working on. The staff would then repeat the directive. That's what they called it. It wasn't a request, it was a directive. When he didn't stop they'd tell him that he would have to face a consequence if he didn't desist in his work. A wouldn't slow down a bit, just kept on working. Then the staff would give A a choice: one, of following the directive or risk having all of his Lego constructs removed from the room. This didn't faze him. So the 1:1 staff would speak to the Number 1. Number 1 isn't pee, it's the title for the person who was heading up the staff at this time. Being alerted to the problem the Number 1 and two or three staff then would enter A's room and start to pick up all of the Lego pieces and throw them into a bag for removal. A wouldn't let go of the pieces that he was working on which then initiated a restraint. As they had been trained, they'd hold him and without hurting him attempt to remove the piece. This in turn initiated an acceleration of A's defiance and he would start to squirm, gently at first and with a smile on his face. However, as the staff continued to restrain him and still trying to get the Lego pieces out of his hand, A would step it up and go to more aggressive contortion.

Staff would be speaking to him calmly informing him that if he continued he would have to be placed in the padded safety room. This also didn't intimidate A what so ever and when staff began to remove him from the room this then kicked in the next level of defiance and A would start to scream, attempt to bite and kick and his body became like a spring flipping this way and that. At this point other staff would engage, a call would be made to the county home program director and the staff nurse and of course in the end A would be placed in the padded room and staff would disengage their holds one by one until the last one let him go. That staff then would leap out of the room because A was coming after him. A would get his hands on the door trying to keep it from closing, but it did. He wasn't done. He'd then take his shoes off and start throwing them at the over head light and once in a while he'd break of a piece of the light cover. By this time he was frothing at the mouth. The children's director would arrive and start to speak to A through the door and the nurse would arrive with an oral sedative, but had a hypodermic needle if he chose not to swallow the pills. They were very patient, and eventually A would de-escalate out of exhaustion and just curl up in a corner of the room. After a while the nurse would enter the room and encourage him to take the sedative, which he did. Then he would be walked back to his room where he would fall out on his bed...and I mean fall out...of this world and into his own.

Man, what a catharsis. Initially it was very upsetting for me to witness this progression. Part of my job, at least as I understood it, was to offer suggestions to staff to prevent the need for the playing out of this drama. This however wasn't the understanding of the staff who believed I was there as a babysitter and a person to whisper into A's ear, "Behave." What I had to offer would be helpful, but. Unfortunately, there was a system of care that didn't include such interventions such as nurturing, relationship building, and other's such as providing a transition period in which staff instead of abruptly coming in on A to give him a directive would instead come in with a warning that in about ten or fifteen minutes he would have to stop the activity he was working on and get ready for the next activity. That would allow him the time to disengage. I mean it made so much sense to provide a transition, but there was this behavioral program that didn't provide for this. They had instead an incentive point system. Cooperate and move from the most restricted level 1 to levels 2, then 3, and then 4, each level giving more privileges, choices, and a later bed time. None of this had any meaning to A and nothing I had to offer staff was allowed. I had to remember they were Social Service employees and I was a Mental Health Worker under the Health Care Agency. Talk about two worlds.

Let me think for a minute. I could see the value of the system of care and how it made it possible for the staff to work within a structure so that decisions would not be arbitrary. However, what kind of kids are placed in a County home? Here I go again. The answer is kids that have been taken away from their parents because the parents had been abusive to them in some combination of physically, emotionally, sexually, or through abandonment. In all cases the removal of the child is traumatic for them. As a result they suffered intense anxiety, depression and especially confusion.

The kids in the County home were emotionally distressed and the institutional system of behavioral care came from Boy's Town, a setting that worked with juvenile delinquents. This behavioral system ignored the difference between a population of juvenile delinquents and the population at the county home which was of severely emotionally challenged children. The behavioral system was not therapeutic, did not provide any sense of security, and assumed that the children's misbehavior was intentional and oppositional rather than being an expression of fear and confusion. Why shouldn't the kids be expressing their pain? They hadn't done anything wrong. But it was the children who were taken away from their home, and not the parents. The kids coming from very limited environments and being stripped of everything they knew and valued were abused by this "well intentioned" system of behavioral modification through the touted structure of behavioral levels. So when a kid had a meltdown, they were stripped of everything in their room including their clothes, any self-soothing objects such as books, Lego's, radio, drawing material, etc. The children's behavioral system itself was abusive. Again, again, and again. It treated the children like they had caused the distress and that it was they who had done something wrong. The last thing these kids needed was a detached and strictly cognitive institutional staff approach. No, they also needed nurturing and time to adjust. No way.

The cottage directors were not trained to work with emotionally challenged children so they couldn't role model for their staff. There was an assigned unit social worker who was trained as a Social Service therapist and who had their office on site, but they didn't interface with the staff as to how to handle the kids. They did spend some

time with the kids, but most of their time was spent on trying to find a placement for the kid either in foster care or a group home. As I described above, the County assigned a therapeutic social worker to interface with the kid, but they had no influence on the staff's interaction with the kids. So overall there was a complete disconnect between the needs of the kids and the needs of staff to maintain some sense of order. Of course, the personal interaction of the staff with the kids was completely arbitrary as it always is in settings of an institutional culture. The kids the staff liked were well, likeable and these children had it easier.

I wasn't really blown away by what was happening. I wasn't happy but I was there for the kids so I held it together. My thing was to fit in so that I could be helpful to the kids that were assigned to me. As in all assignments at this point I had finally learned not to focus on the system for that is only demoralizing, but instead to approach it in an interpersonal manner. With this in mind my first step after connecting with the kid is to find an ally among the staff that would kind of try to put my stuff into operation without formalizing it, which would only result in rejection of my suggested intervention. But in this cottage there was no such person. It sucked. The crew that worked this cottage didn't have their heads on straight. They had no idea of who or what A was. They had no concept of Reactive Attachment Disorder.

This disorder occurs when a kid like A lives the life that he lived without ever being able to form a long term and positive nurturing relationship. He never was allowed to attach to his mother, because she was an alcoholic. He couldn't attach to anyone at the Russian Orphanage. The Mexican family that adopted him dumped him. A then was placed in a unit at the County home where all of the staff were so detached that they could have been one of the kids. He was then abandoned by the County home, at least in his mind, when he was placed with the foster family that was like an upscale orphanage. Next, the parents of the foster family then dumped him back in the County home when A's behavior overwhelmed them. No, attachment wasn't safe to the psyche...too much trauma associated with the repeated loss of relationships. Imagine being a kid who never experienced the safety and security of a protective and nurturing relationship.

What's so confusing for someone who is willing to step into that caring position such as an adopting foster parent, or even a staff at such a place as the County home, their tendency is to smother the kid in love, touch, and intimacy. Yet, for the kid any sign of warmth creates tremendous anxiety and fear for in their world it is predictable that all of that warm fuzzy stuff will one day be withdrawn. That's why the diagnosis is termed Reactive Attachment Disorder. When working with kids like this the approach has to initially be largely detached with the warming up to the relationship entirely in the control of the kid. That's what isn't taught to the adopting and foster parents. Naturally they are effusive with nurturing, enveloping the kid who hadn't experienced it before, and to the kid all that goey stuff is like dumping him into a boiling hot tub. It's like if your hands have been out in the cold for a good while and then you come in and wash you hands in warm water. To your hands it feels like the water is boiling hot. To the kid, immediate nurturing also feels like boiling while to the person supplying the nurturing it is just the right temperature.

I wonder who is supposed to determine how much is acceptable... probably one would have to look to the kid to be their own guide in how nurturing can be accepted. That's why when I entered the room for my first one-to-one time with him, the time when

A was working on the Lego jet fighter plan, that I just sat on his bed, at the far end, not speaking to him...and just watched for a good amount of time and then slowly I began to non-verbally engage by just separating the Lego parts according to size. This was safe for him...and once he felt safe and in control, he opened up the play with flying the Lego fighter plane into the wall. It became a game...and no judgment.

There was no, "Gee A, you put all of that work into making the plane. Why crash it into the wall. You shouldn't do that. Come on now, let's pick up all the pieces and I'll help you put it back together. You should be proud of having built it yourself. It's not healthy for you to break up what you make."

Nope, that wouldn't have worked at all. But staff not knowing this, not being properly trained to adjust to a common diagnosis as Reactive Attachment Disorder, would speak exactly like that when seeing A wing his plane into the wall. This kind and somewhat empathetic manner in speaking to A was in itself a trigger for an unsettling response for that is how A could push the adult away and reestablish an emotionally safe distance. A well trained staff wouldn't feel hurt by A's rejection, but the staff was not well trained, and when A responded in his negative way it just led to the staff feeling incompetent and rejected. Instead of backing off they would increasingly close the space attempting to "convince" A that he just needed to change his attitude and all would be well. Well, no...that never worked and as they closed the space, A increased his stuff to push them away and then it became a tug of war...with A pushing and the staff pulling and that's called client aggression which of course further triggered his Reactive Attachment Disorder leading right back to restraints and further isolation in the Blue Padded Room.

The staff never had a chance because the system was not therapeutically based because it was strictly behaviorally based on an increasing sequence of consequences that failed to take into account the kid's disability, and life history. The system was just not set up to be able to formally accept a therapeutic viewpoint of behavior. OK, so I can't find a staff ally, then I would look for one in another branch of programming. So, I took the step of looking into other elements of programming to find the right person. During the time that this search took I began to meet with A three times a week and found myself intrigued by this kid.

A began to initiate dialogues on some amazing ideas and thoughts for any ten year-old. There was a poster of our galaxy, with the planets circling the sun that was placed just outside the entrance to the gym.

"The sun rules the planets. God rules the people of the earth. The golden light of the sun is the God of the worlds that we live in. Some worlds we can see at night like Venus and Mars. Some we can't see at night like Jupiter. So while we can easily see most everything in broad daylight, we can't see any of the planets unless it's dark. It's the same for each other. Some of us can be seen, many of us can't. We see each other, but most can't see what we see. It's amazing."

"Amazing. I'd say this was amazing."

"Everything isn't as it seems. It just seems to be because we've all agreed that it is this way. But it really isn't. We're here but are we really? It's all about time. Time makes it here, makes it now. But people made up time to put order into the chaos. Chaos isn't really chaos; it's just what we don't understand. By putting limits on what we don't understand puts limits on what we can learn. What we learn seems right, but how can it

be when everything is so messed up.”

“I’m very interested in what you’re sharing. There aren’t many people with whom one can share such knowledge. Thank you for including me.”

“I’m here with you for a reason. It’s for us to discover what that reason is.”

“Hey, isn’t there a library?”

“Yeah.”

“It would be interesting to check it out.”

“Come with me. I’ll show it to you”

All this time the staff 1:1 was with us, but he kept himself just out of hearing so that he could provide a certain amount of privacy for us even when he was with us. Now, this is an interesting staff member. He was different than all the other staff. He was like a “nerd.” He was made fun of and he was a bit funny in the way he related. Not all there, but not completely gone either. Very quiet. No peer friends. Different, but OK. He told me his father was a psychologist as was his mother, but he didn’t have the brains to be one also. So he worked at the County home. That’s better than being a psychologist where you just evaluate and tell people what to do, but no one knows how to do it. Here as a child care worker he was directly involved with making a change...at least a bit of friendliness and care goes a lot further than a pile of words.

We made it to the library. It was after school. The had school for the kids run by the County Dept. of Ed. The library was actually a county library with a county librarian. She was very accommodating and very pleased to see A. She knew him from when his class came to the library. A told the librarian that he was interested in planets and she guided us to the portion of the shelves that had books on the subject. A chose a few and then we sat down and began checking them out. He knew all the planets and then opened a book on astronomy and knew the names of many of the constellations. Ten years old. Who is this kid? The librarian’s kindness, yeah, a place that he can go to be safe and secure with all the books in the world to be like he said, different worlds exist simultaneously, it’s only our concept of time that limits our access to them...or something like that.

Going to the library became a part of what we did when we hung out together. Still so much head stuff. He was like most of my kids living in bodies that were so limited in what it can do. Nothing wrong with the body, just never or not exposed enough to a broad spectrum of activities including basic sports. OK. So it’s time to get A out of his head and into this our physical world, this dimension. Got to do some work so that he develops an anchor to the here and now. Guess what? The gym backed onto the library and it was just by walking out the rear door that we entered it. I started to take him into the gym to learn how to play basketball. He didn’t want to in the beginning. He was only willing to play Uno.

OK, Uno, I like Uno. The thing about playing Uno with A was that he cheated. He didn’t hide his cheating. He did it right out in the open. However, when I chided him for cheating, he copped an attitude.

“Hey, why cop an attitude when you cheat so openly. What am I supposed to do, treat you like you’re brain damaged or something? No, play by the rules.”

Woops. Saying that to him only acted as a trigger to another one of his landmines. He knocked the cards off the table and got up and just walked off to his room. I guess it was another one of those, “It’s my way or no way.”

His one-to-one followed him and insisted that he return and pick up the cards. Oh no. Yep. He followed protocol. A refused to follow the directive. Step two. Give choices. Step Three: Call for support. Step Four: Restraint. Yep, A accelerates shifts gears in this dance right into a tantrum: Step Five: The Blue Padded Room. Step Six: Arrival of the emergency team...sedative...eventually back into his room, passing out.

The next time I had supervision with the County therapist assigned to A I reviewed the circumstances of his collapse.

“So, what does he get out of the tantrums, the restraint, and the padded room?”

“I don’t know.”

“Could this be how he gets human contact? I mean being born into an alcoholic stupor, brought up in an orphanage where there was insufficient human interaction, I guess the only way you got it was by misbehaving. The restraint by a number of staff draped all over your body is pretty intimate. Then being tossed into the padded room is totally the opposite of the intimacy, a form of emotional safety after such intimacy and then this all leading to passing out from the sedatives...a way of dropping out for a while. Kind of a sexual sequence in a way. What do you think?”

“Could be. If so, then we need to find a substitute for this way of making human contact.”

“I agree. I wonder how this can be achieved?”

“It would be cool if a female staff member would spend some time with him before bedtime to read him a story or just to kind of cuddle and talk about what is of interest to him.”

“Never happen. Cuddling with a kid isn’t allowed.”

“OK, but maybe a bedtime ritual of a story to be read on his bed.”

“Maybe. I’ll bring it up with the unit supervisor.”

The next time I visited with him he wanted to play Uno again.

“Ok, we can do that, but I can’t cope with what happened last time with you being restrained and put into the Blue Room. It hurt me to see you suffer like that. I mean, it seems that if we play Uno and it ends up like that again, well, I can’t handle it. So, if we play again, we have to play by the rules. You know playing by the rules isn’t always bad. I mean, if you ever want to get back to your family, (He kept speaking of his immensely large foster family as his family) well you got to decide to follow the rules so that can happen. No one is going to help you move back there if you’re going to fail placement again. They feel it’s not good for you to repeatedly fail your living situation. So, learning how to play by the rules and then choosing to continue to do so will demonstrate to the people who make the decision that you might succeed if they agree to place you back with your family. It’s kind of up to you.”

He looked at me for a long time, then smiled and said, “Let’s see if I can play by the rules.”

He did and it was fun.

“So A, you can play by the rules in cards. It’s also important to learn and to accept playing by the rules in sports so that you can play with peers who also have accepted that playing by the rules allows for more fun than the chaos of each person wanting to play according to their own whims. So, let’s go to the gym and pick up playing basketball. Basketball is big here and it’ll open up some social skills that you need to pick up.”

Off we went to the gym. He worked me over while I was attempting to teach him that learning how to make a shot before just throwing the ball around was the way to go. I taught him that when you practice without discipline you play without discipline. The first step to playing is to warm up and that allows the body to get ready for the exercise. When I was a teenager swimming competitively I never grasped this concept. I believed, and for no good reason, that warming up would just sap some of the energy I would need to swim my races. I don't know why the coach hadn't identified this problem with me and just sat me down to explain the physiology of the warm-up. But he didn't and at the time I wasn't intuitive enough to realize that it was only after swimming my races that I actually began to be ready to compete. I'd be in the cool down pool, where we swam some laps after a race to stretch out, that I began to feel really comfortable in the water. I just didn't have it together to make the connection to the fact that it was my races that were my warm-ups...so in competition I always failed to reach my potential. And it was a kind of tragedy for me because I put all the work in during practices, swimming those endlessly boring miles to build up stamina and speed, and yet I crashed because of this basic failure to grasp the essential element of the need to warm up.

Well, teaching A the importance of the warm-up took many visits to the gym. Then we got into how to make a shot that not only left his hands, but actually makes its way through the air and into the basket. The kid had talent. He was small but strong and he could hit a shot every once in a while. My youngest daughter taught me the fundamentals of making shots and winning. When she was young I taught her how to shoot a basket. Her favorite game was Horse. That's the game when one person makes a shot the other person has to make the same shot. If the person made the shot then the original shooter could initiate another shot or repeat the first shot. If the person missed their shot they then got the first letter of the word, "horse." Who ever got the final letter first, lost the game. Anyway, at a certain point I couldn't beat her. It wasn't because she could make all the shots that I made. It was because I couldn't consistently make the one shot she made. She would stand a few feet back from the basket and pop it in. Of course, I would match her shot. Then she'd shoot it again from the same spot. I usually made that shot also. The thing about her was that she could make that shot endlessly and I couldn't so at some point, maybe seven shots into it, or once it was up to thirty-four shots, eventually I would miss and she'd win.

"Well, I congratulate you on always winning, however isn't it boring to just make one kind of shot?"

"You know dad, there is nothing that pleases me more than winning and a game is all about winning. I make the shot, you don't, you lose, I win."

"Ok, I grant you that point. It's an important point too. But still as your father and your coach, I would like you to be able to make shots from other points on the court. You always won't be able to play just Horse, and in a real game it isn't always possible to get to the one spot from where you always make your shot."

She wouldn't cooperate, instead insisting to just keep making her shot. To be honest, it really was frustrating to me and boring. It's more fun to make shots that are difficult and from all over the court.

"That's why you lose, dad. You're a much better shot than me, meaning you can make various shots from all over the court. Also, you feel it's boring to make the same shot over and over again even if by doing so you'd increase your shooting percentage. So

basically you don't play to win, you play to have fun, and that is the formula for failure in sports, and in life. You want to have fun, even when fun doesn't lead to achieving your goal, if not for yourself, at least for the team that you are coaching or even your family."

She made a point that set me on my heels. She was right. I would need to contemplate this remarkable insight. Still, I needed her to be able to make other shots. It just drove me up the wall not getting her to be willing to take a chance to improve herself even if it meant that in the short run she might lose at the game. Hmmmm. The other thing besides winning that was of utmost importance to her was money. So, one day it came to me.

"Here's what I am proposing. I will pay you \$5.00 if you just move from the position in front of the basket either to the side or to a spot one step back. What do you say?"

"\$5.00?"

"Yep, \$5.00."

"Mighty tempting. Ok, let's see the money."

"No problem honey. It's right here in my hand. See?"

So she took a step back. She got very nervous. She held the ball and then with me waving the \$5, she finally put it up...and... in it went. KaChing! She was so elated that it went in and now with the \$5.00. She kept shooting it from the new spot and it just kept going in.

"Ok. How about another \$5.00 for another spot?"

"I don't know dad. I want the money, but I don't want to miss."

"I understand. Why don't you think about it and let me know when you want more money."

"I'm ready."

"Great. What spot are you going to choose?"

"Another step back."

"Do it."

She did, and did it again and again and again. Wow, now she had three spots and she hadn't missed yet. I wondered how far this could go?

Well, the real question was how much money did I have. Right back to the free throw line and now two steps, then three steps, then four steps to the left and to the right of the basket. The steps to the sides and back a step, then another step and so on all over the court as far back as the three-point line. She was elated. I was elated. My first thought was to take her down to the playground where the teenage boys gathered to play Bball and put some money on a game of Horse with her getting the first shot. But she would never do it, and so my retirement was put off for another thirty years. Still, making the shot that can be made locks into the brain success and success was the name of my daughter's game.

You know when I watch basketball players warm up they start by shooting from where ever, making some and missing some. That's also how they play. They don't start up close to the basket in order to lock in success, and then to gradually move back to continue with success just at a greater range. No they don't. They actually practice missing, and making some. None of them shoot consistently over 45%. Most shoot considerably less. Taking what my daughter taught me about making shots and winning; being successful, I carried that lesson to working with my clients, and now with A.

At first I had him shooting just as close to the hoop as possible. He wanted to shoot from the free throw line, but he missed most of his shots from that distance, and all he was teaching himself was how to fail. The way to success is through success. Starting shooting from close up increases the odds of making the shot, thus the success builds confidence and the skill to make a shot from one step further away. And so on until one is hitting shots from the free throw line. I'm an Ok shot. But one of the staff was a hot shot. I had convinced him to work with A on the days I wasn't around, and he did. One day the three of us were shooting around and A challenged us to a game of who could make the most free throw shots out of ten. Now he's one of those kids that when they get it, they got it. I'm ok at shooting free throws and the staff was good. A beat us.

Imagine a ten year-old winning. I was proud of him and so was the staff. There is something about knowing you can make a shot from certain spots on the court. The guy with the ball works to get to his spot while the defender works to keep him off balance and away from his spot. A. had a spot. The free throw line. Man, if he could get a couple more spots like one to the right side and one from the left side, the boy might be able to compete. We worked on that along with his dribbling and passing. He eventually mastered both of these skills, not great but good enough and then one day I came to spend time with him and was told that he was with the other kids from the unit playing basketball. When I got there, yep, there he was, in the middle of the mix playing the game called basketball. Rules and skills and the opportunity to be with someone who understands how all of this works...that's what A had needed all along.

"Want to get back to your family? Behave." Easy to say, but is behaving also a skill? Yes it is. Behaving means you can do things and not only find meaning in what you do, but that also provides meaning to others who are with you. The staff seeing his success through my work with him decided that maybe what I had to offer couldn't hurt. They began to provide A with some transitioning between activities and the tantrums just kind of popped and blew away. A staff or two began reading him a bedtime story...no snuggling but close enough. There was a Russian speaking staff member who began to spend some quality time with him...not all going so bad.

"You know, A, that getting along with people is kind of like playing a game. There are rules, like in playing Horse. People play by the rules and they get along. People try to change the rules in the middle of the game just results in conflict. It also kind of like the planets that circle the earth. Each of them have their own path. I wonder what would happen if one or more of the planets decided to change their path?"

"They might end up hitting another planet."

"That's right. Just like people driving their cars. All the people in the United States drive on the right side of the road. However, in other parts of the world, like Australia and England people actually drive on the left. There would be total chaos if people driving in the United States all of a sudden found themselves on a freeway in Australia or England. Kaboom, smash, pain. It's very important when you want to get along with people to find out the rules that they live by. Then you can choose to fit in or not. That's OK, but not knowing the rules and not fitting in and just thinking that no one likes you and that they pick on you isn't accurate."

"Why do I have to fit in to their rules? The world is a terrible place. People are always hurting each other. They should live by my rules, then everyone can get along."

"That's an interesting point. I wonder what your rules are that would allow

everyone to get along?

“Be nice.”

“Hmmm. Yes I can see how that would improve how people relate. I wonder how we can get people to go along with that rule?”

“Make me the King of the world.”

“Right, that might do it. I just wonder how we can make them do things and still be nice?”

“I hadn’t thought of that.”

“It’s great to have ideas. It’s also important to anticipate the reaction of people to our ideas and to wonder which of the people that we know would react in a positive manner to our thoughts. Those are the people who we might want to try out an idea with first. They would probably think about our idea then provide feedback that we might not have considered. Like, wanting to get back together with your foster family is a great goal, but right now no one is taking that idea too seriously given the behavior that makes them so nervous. You know what I mean; the type of behavior that has you isolated in the Blue Room.”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

“So I wonder how the goal of getting back together with your foster family can be achieved. I mean, I wonder what kind of behavior will help you get back home?”

It had been about five months that I had been working with A when we had this conversation. Guess what? It was the moment of change. Of course it helped immensely that the staff was starting to use the interventions that I had role modeled that are effective in supporting a change in attitude. Basically the interventions are designed to communicate a real concern in action for the kid. Listening to his point of view. Assisting him to evaluate the likely response to it. Providing him with verbal cues that allow for sufficient time for him to adjust to any change in activity. To have staff sit with him in the evening and give him a little tender loving care. These interactions communicate “I care for you. You are important. I am here for you.” With these elements increasing in presence, he started to follow the rules and at a certain point the social worker began to seriously think that because of the improvement in his behavior that it might be time to start considering a reunification with his foster family. It took a while but it did take place. I was very proud of A. I made a transition visit or two to the foster home when he went back to them, but then as is part of my work, I had to stop seeing him. It was sad for both of us.

On most Sunday afternoons I can be found at the drum circle down at the pier. I play the flute. Well, there I was playing and all of a sudden I felt something grabbing me from behind around my waist. I turned around and there was A with his arms thrown around me.

“Hi.”

“Hi, A.”

He was there at the beach with a slew of his foster brothers. He had spotted me and came charging over. I gave him a hug. He smiled. We talked about his family. He showed me the fish that he had caught. All was going well.

“Are we ever going to see each other again?”

“That’s a great question. The universe is full of possibilities as you know. It’s not going to happen too soon, but it’s hard to predict the future. Just know this. I will always

remember you and because you are practicing what we learned together, then in that way I will always be with you.”

We hugged again when he had to leave. What a nice moment. What a great job when it works.

Part of my work is to be able to handle the repeated loss of meaningful relationships. I believe that my life has been a training ground for that so that I could keep my motivation and interest high with each new child with whom I was matched. Being in the moment is the place of balance. Carry what is learned from the past, but don't allow the mistakes to burden the future. Mistakes are not done on purpose. They happen mostly out of ignorance and a lack of proper training. What I know now is what I needed a long time ago, and the relationships that I had a long time ago were engaged without the essential knowledge that I have now gained. I can say that for most parents. What do parents know about something they have never done before? Everything thought to be right were only shots into the dark. A few were correct, most missed the mark so of course endless mistakes were made. Most of us still can hold it together, but some can't; not won't, but can't. The lucky ones get help. The rest end up lost and so do their children.

Most of the kids going to jail are part of this last family group. They don't get to go to therapy. Therapy doesn't exist for these families. Cops, arrests, juvenile hall, probation officers, adult authority, prison, parole officers, probation officers, no right to vote, can't get a job, and recidivism...these are what exist for this population. Their mother's doing drugs during the pregnancy and giving birth to drug babies with brain problems and these lead to dysfunction that leads to poor judgment and choices. Poor memory, poor ability to process visual and auditory information, struggle to deduce, to infer, to anticipate, to understand the relationship between outcomes and the dysfunction, so more dysfunction and well that's just the way it is. A heart felt society for some, and heartless for most.

Does it have to be Money gets...what Poverty lacks. Is this fair? Our culture whispers, “Be mature. It isn't about fair. It's about getting and holding on to what you can, and keep other's from grabbing your share. The ones that can't are weak and the powerful can treat them just like that as they always have. Don't cry about it.” Or, can it be, “Be pleased that one has made the choice to make such good use of one's gift and has the morals to not take advantage of anyone weaker, and instead has chosen to dedicate one's working life to the help of the weak, as best as any one person can.”

So A's, “Are we ever going to be able to see each other again?”

And my, “Maybe not right away, but who knows, There is the future and as is well known, it's hard to predict the future.”

7. K2

I have the confidence of success in being able to form a relationship with most kids, not all, but most. The challenge is to remember the part about, “most kids.” There was this one twelve year-old Hispanic boy K2 who it was reported that no one could work with. I refer to him as K2 because when I write about my experiences it is easier on me to think of his name which started with K. So, since he is the second kid that I’m writing about whose name starts with the letter K, well, then K2. My challenge. I believe that in this case the ethnic background had something to do with what was happening between him and me, and then maybe not. He also wasn’t overly verbal. Not just with me, but with staff and peers. It didn’t seem that he connected with anyone as far as just hanging out. Mainly he related with only one or two staff.

This relationship was complicated by a teen with whom I was also matched. He too had a reputation of being hard to reach. I didn’t find this to be true in the first few weeks that I worked with him. He was into basketball and I like that sport a great deal, and while I can’t really play it at my age, I can still shoot and pass. The point is that he and I seemed to hit it off well and we enjoyed playing Horse together. Everything seemed to be going well until I had been informed that before he had been placed at the County home for children, that his mother had died of cancer. It seemed that this subject was “taboo” but in my arrogance, but also in my deep belief that I could reach that spot with him, I brought it up. Whoooooooops. That was the end. I mean like a large iron door just slammed down between us and that was it for him. He just walked away saying, “You don’t know nothing of this and you never will.”

I didn’t quit. That’s one of my strengths and also equally a weakness. Not knowing when to stop. I did stop eventually, but not until I tried for a month to meet up with him. He absolutely refused to interact with me and he held to it even after his therapist, social worker and staff tried to get him to “give me a second chance.” Now, during this period of time while I was working hard with K2, a twelve year-old, this teen began to whisper to K2 that if he knew what was good for him he’d start to give me a hard time; a form of vengeance for my transgression. The teen was one of the top guns in the cottage that K2 lived in, and as K2 had been brought up in a heavy gang homeland, he responded to his orders and began to give me a hard time. Now I was faced with two rejections. Troubling.

I wasn’t angry at the teen, but he was hurting K2, keeping K2 from fully benefiting from what I had to offer him. When I first had met up with K2 it was at the moment that he was meeting with a few staff in regards to an incident of aggression that he had during which he stabbed a staff with a pencil. He wasn’t able to communicate what led up to the aggression, but apologized and gave a hug to the staff that he had attacked. The staff was detached and failed to respond to either the apology or the hug. K2 had a long history of aggression and had failed numerous group homes and foster care placements.

In the beginning I was just trying to assess his skills as to areas of strengths and deficiencies. It was clear that he liked to play sports, and especially enjoyed playing basketball. Because of his aggression he had been assigned a one-to-one staff that had to be with him during all times that he wasn’t in school. The staff assigned changed with

each shift and was different on any two days; all of this depended upon the scheduling of staff. It didn't seem as though there was any clear reason why any one or other of the staff was assigned to him, and it wasn't unusual for a staff with whom he "was at war with" to be assigned as his 1:1. This made for an interesting interplay.

Anyway, I was given permission to take K2 to the gym to assess his basketball skills along with his frustration tolerance and his ability to accept instruction. This is just some of the knowledge that assists me in working with the kids. It was clear that he had some of the basic skills such as shooting, but while he could dribble he struggled with the concept of "double dribbling." Double dribbling is when a person dribbles the ball then stops and holds the ball, then starts to dribble again. That's against the rules. Once a player stops dribbling then a shot must be made or the ball must be passed off. He was pretty calm when this was pointed out, however it became clear that he also couldn't grasp the concept of double-dribbling. This was an indication of the cause of some of his problems. He was challenged with processing concepts that guide play; such as rules.

Usually when I start play with a new kid I let him win, but in this case for some reason or other I didn't follow this formula. Letting a kid win is really helpful because it starts the relationship out on a positive note and one that isn't threatening to a kid's self-esteem. When I won the first game, he exhibited excellent frustration tolerance and was more than willing to play a second game, which he then won. After winning he wanted to just shoot around and so he began to attempt three point shots. He demonstrated amazing perseverance shooting up to twenty times for each shot he made. He did have difficulty accepting any "coaching" and thus was not able to respond to the suggestions that might have improved his accuracy. When I gave him a ten minute warning before we had to stop playing he was responsive to this transition strategy. Notifying kids a few minutes before an activity must be curtailed is a very powerful strategy that assists the kid to disengage from an activity and to prepare for the next activity. A great deal of oppositional conflict arises when staff fails to provide this interim time to get ready for the change.

On the way back to the cottage K2 exhibited a good sense of humor, however inappropriate it was. He suddenly burst into a run and disappeared around one of the cottages. Of course his 1:1 being responsible for his whereabouts charged off after him. At first he couldn't be found. But as the staff walked past a large doll house he jumped out laughing and just walked up to the staff and gave him a quick hug. I observed that after dinner he was often told that because of an earlier transgression that he was restricted to his room. When I attempted to engage with him in his room he was not receptive, telling me to get out. I went off for a little while to read the daily log and when I looked into his room through the window in his door I could see that he was doing a cross word puzzle. That really surprised me what with his poor speaking skills, here he was doing a cross word puzzle...him that was a puzzle in itself. His attitude wasn't so puzzling though; he really just seemed to need time to himself.

Part of trying to understand K2 was for me to speak with staff about their experiences with him. All of the staff were consistent in their comments that his aggression did not appear to have any specific cause, or what is called an "antecedent" that would trigger the behavior. The staff shared that in their minds that his aggression was spontaneous even in an activity that he was enjoying. It was not unusual for him to suddenly strike out and hit a staff. He often attempted to use a "weapon" such as a broom

handle or a pen. He had even chased a female staff and repeatedly struck her. They reported that daily restraints was the norm, and during the restraint he would struggle and continue to tantrum after being placed in the Blue Room which is the padded safe room in which kids are placed when they can't be calmed down. They shared that after having his tantrum, he would be seen falling asleep sucking his thumb. They also shared that when at home before his placement that he was reported to have been physically aggressive, attacking his mother and siblings frequently. The mother was completely intimidated and K2 ran the house.

On the other side of the picture, the staff related that there was nothing that K2 liked better than to be asked to help the staff with any physical task such as cleaning up the linen closet, or getting a room ready for a new kid, or going for meals from the cafeteria when staff and kids had to stay back, or running an errand to the front desk. He also liked to help new kids get used to being in the County home. This was encouraging.

Overall, regardless of the aggression exhibited it seemed that he was well liked by staff. It was interesting that K2 was constantly seeking opportunities to help, but staff had not formalized this as would be done should he be given a job. The staff related that they wanted to keep K2 in the place of having the opportunities to help as a positive consequence for cooperative behavior. It was required that he have a "good period" without aggression before being rewarded with the opportunity to help. I wondered about the wisdom of this. For me it seemed that like with many kids that are high energy it is better to have them burn off that energy with structured activity and games rather than for them to burn it off with unacceptable behavior. To give him a job would provide him with a positive outlet and a way to feel connected and meaningful.

It wasn't long before it became clear to me that while he was reported to be aggressive with his family it may have been that being the oldest sibling that he was actually not running the house out of coercion, but was running the house because he was the only one able to be responsible enough for the task. In the following weeks I had the opportunity to observe him during the regular visits that his father and mother made. Both parents were passive after greeting K2. They would sit together for up to forty-five minutes and after the initial greeting the parents would just sit quietly with K2 until it was time for them to leave. It appeared that the mother was somewhat developmentally delayed. Because I don't speak Spanish I couldn't interact, but I'm pretty sure that my assessment was accurate. Given that possibility, that a twelve year-old was responsible for the running of the house including discipline, that his aggression which may have had some context within his home was actually an outcome of being overwhelmed and not having any other positive role modeling for discipline.

It was very likely that his dad used physical force to establish discipline and K2 just copied him. To me this altered the whole perspective on K2's "misbehavior." This also connected to his habit of giving orders to me and to staff. He would say, "It's time to go to the gym. Come on, hurry up, let's get going," instead of saying, "Can we go to the gym?" Also, it could be possible that his striking out at staff was consistent with how he behaved with his family when they failed to do as he directed. Because he wasn't verbal, mainly interacting with short directives, apologies, and a sequence of facial expressions it was difficult to take a cognitive conversational approach. Still, he could do cross word puzzles so while his expressive skills were deficient, perhaps his visual processing was more advanced than one might have thought.

Overall, K2 was fun to be with. On one hot day it was announced that there was going to be a massive water balloon fight. He had gone off with a staff to the local mall to buy balloons. I was just arriving and as I was walking to the entrance I heard my name being called out. There was K2 with a big smile on his face. OK, I must be doing something right. Upon getting back to the cottage he was more than helpful in filling the balloons with water. Once the balloons were filled all the cottages that were participating met out on the play field. The game was kids against staff. It was hilarious and as I had observed numerous times with kids that can't get along, when they join in a playful atmosphere that is active such as the water balloon battle, there were no incidents of unacceptable behavior. They played for an hour, soaking each other, working in small teams while attacking and running away from an attack as individuals...girls and boys all laughing and having the time of their lives. K2 was in the thick of things and had a great time. When the game was called to a halt to get ready for dinner, K2 was right there helping staff to clean up the field.

So what was the problem with this kid? As long as staff engaged him or there was an organized activity it seemed that he was fine. The problems seemed to arise when he had nothing to do, when a staff wouldn't connect with him, or when he was told that he couldn't help. This need for either self-isolation as when he is in his room working on a puzzle or for constant interaction with the staff seeking to be useful and meaningful made it difficult for him to find any balance in his life. If he wasn't left alone when he needed to be he became stern and standoffish, as when I came into his room when he was working on the crossword puzzle and bluntly told me to get out. If he wanted interaction with a staff and it wasn't immediately forthcoming he likely felt hurt and rejected and in response became irritating and demanding until the staff was forced to interact. In these types of moments staff's response was to redirect him or to send him to his room. This always failed until the interaction he sought was attained even when it had to be obtained through conflict. It's clear to me that conflict is the one sure way of the kids making a connection. So often their plea for positive interaction is ignored or delayed. To them any connection is better than no connection.

He was interesting in other ways. One evening I hung around after dinner and stayed with him while he watched a Laker game with his 1:1 staff. During the time that they were watching the game he got up three times and spontaneously gave the staff a hug. The staff was only slightly responsive, not returning the hug, but just giving a slight smile. There is a strong prohibition on staff showing affection other than through verbal statements. This no touch policy is a consequence of a liability standard, but also inadvertently communicates a profound sense of detachment on the part of staff so that these children, whether they are young or teens, feel a large absence of nurturing and emotional connection. This has a strong affect on the children, wanting the connection, not getting it, and because of their trauma their attachment issues are triggered into action resulting in a lot of behavior that expresses this absence. Their aggressive reaction also makes the staff leery of offering what little positive connection that is allowed thus forcing a further emotional wedge into place. There is a steady diminishment of what little self-esteem that they have left from the past abuse by their parents. It's again very sad that staff is "handcuffed" by liability standards that deplete their ability to provide the children with the emotional intimacy that is so therapeutic and healing.

This reminds me of when I first started with this kind of work when I was

assigned two boys, one two years old and the other three that were in the young children's cottage. During the first part of my time with kids is a period of assessment in which all I really do is observe their interaction with peers and staff. This allows me to determine what is going on with the kid and with the people who care for the child. As a father of four children I immediately observed that the staff working with these little ones were mostly female and surprisingly related with the children in a largely custodial manner. As it turned out it was the permanent staff that was interacting with the children in this way. I observed later that the few staff who interacted with the children in a nurturing fashion were floaters; new staff that were assigned to fill a staff vacancy at different cottages on any given day.

This really upset me but then I began to give it some thought. The kids were always coming and going. Attachment must be very painful and repeated attachment and loss even for the professional staff must be more than painful. How to reach out to a defenseless child and then have to let go so completely? Yes, it was understandable why a balance between attachment and detachment must be attained and each staff had to have their own way of doing that. So, what appeared to be as custodial, and it was, really wasn't because of any nurturing deficiencies in their personality...it was just the uniform of the work that they did. I'm sure even though their emotions were somewhat encased, their hearts must have still been going out to the little ones. Of course, not all staff were handling this form of "love and pain" well.

These little ones were stripped of everything that they knew; their parents, their apartments, their toys, and their peers. Their sleeping arrangement was in a large room filled with what were called cubbies. The cubby was a partitioned space with two beds and a dresser. Between the cubbies were aisles. When it was nap time or bedtime the lights were turned off except for some night lights in the room. There was one or two staff sitting at a table in the corner. So, once the kids were put down, they were really quite isolated. When the child woke up from the nap they were alone, except for another little child who may or may not still be in their bed. The child would then get up and wander around, gradually making their way toward the door and the hallway that led back into the common room. Imagine, being taken away from your home, placed in a safe institution, yet even if it looked like a cottage from outside, inside it was an institution, and waking up all alone. It must have been terrifying, and with the two children that I spent time with, they definitely were frightened and cried when they awoke.

That's when I got into trouble. I decided to coordinate my visits with the little ones to coincide with their nap time and by doing so I could wait in their cubby for them to wake up. Once they opened their eyes I was there to greet them, someone to reach out to them speaking softly and taking them on my lap, giving them a hug. After holding them for a bit they would get down and taking my hand we would head out into the common room. Well, I was able to do this for a few weeks and it really helped the bonding between the little boys and myself. However, it all came to an end as I was informed that this type of approach was unacceptable. I was called into the social worker's office and even after listening to why I was interacting with the children in this manner I was informed that I would no longer be allowed to be with the children when they woke up from their nap. Instead I would have to check in with the social worker and then when the children were brought out to the common area, I would be free to be with them.

I spoke to this with the children's therapist and while he was empathetic and appreciated the nurturing effectiveness of being there when the children woke from their naps, he had no influence on the programming. As said before, the therapists were from Children and Youth Services and the children's home staff was from Social Services who controlled this placement and so the therapist were as powerless as I was. The staff heard my comments to the social worker about my reasons for being in the cubby when the children woke, being that it felt that they needed a greater degree of nurturing. Actually it was also part of my job to role model for staff a more effective manner of interacting with my assigned children. Remember, in all cases the children I was placed with were assigned because they were failing to make a "normal and healthy adjustment" and were at risk for hospitalization due to the intensity of their tantrums.

My comments about the "custodial" manner of the staff was a trigger to staff and their leader got an attitude and there after treated me like the "enemy." I wasn't though. I should have chosen a more appropriate word than "custodial." I didn't blame them personally, but instead I was addressing my comments to the program that created this institutional dynamic of forcing the staff distancing from the children.

Regardless of not being able to greet the boys when they woke from their naps, the bonding had already taken place and the two little boys still interacted with me as a caring adult and would run over to me when ever I visited their cottage. This should have been a good thing, however my ability to connect really upset one of the staff who then one day triggered one of my boys into a full tantrum during lunch. I was sitting on a little kids chair at the table with my other boy when she brought the boy who by this time was in a full tantrum and she dumped his flailing body onto my lap sneering, and saying, "You're so good, let's see how you do now." With the hysterical child on my lap I just reacted intuitively and wrapped my arms around him, cooed into his ear, hummed a bit, and within a minute he was calmer, with me wiping the tears and mucous from his face. I looked over to the staff, raised my eyebrows, and then resumed my time with the two boys.

Nurturing is the essential therapeutic element that promotes healing, and for the institutional attitude to strip the staff of this is really detrimental, though not actually illegal. Sad.

Anyway, back to K2. He was sitting with the staff, demonstrating affection to the staff hoping for some comforting connection, but was being largely ignored and put off. I kind of knew from my time with him that he wouldn't accept this level of detachment. Part of my work is to intervene, when possible, to interfere with the initiation of a cycle that leads to aggression. So I redirected the boy and sought permission to take him to the game room to play some pool. Permission was granted and K2 and I, along with his 1:1 walked over to the game room. Now, when K2, with whom I hadn't to date played this game, picked up the cue I noticed that he held it backwards, with the tip behind him and using the blunt end of the cue for hitting the balls. He had his reason, "It's bigger. Why should I use the tiny part?"

OK, that's an interesting point. Let's see how he does. Hmm. Not too well. But as I have stated before, the kid has perseverance. He kept it up and every once in a while a ball actually went in.

"See, I told you it would work."

After a while I encouraged him to try the cue end and surprisingly he did, but with

no better success. So, why not use the larger blunt end? The boy definitely had his own way of doing things. To him, it didn't seem to matter as long as the ball dropped into the pocket. It was OK and I guess most importantly it was his way.

We spent about an hour hanging out in the game room playing pool and then he went over to one of the video games and played that. At some point the 1:1 notified us that we would have to return to the cottage for bedtime. Upon getting back, one of the kids was freaking out, running around with a couple of staff trying to catch him. The boy was laughing and too quick for staff as he kept slipping out of their grasp. This behavior triggered K2 and he began to get hyped up and started to yell encouragement and to jump all around. He was told to go into his room, the directive that all kids in the cottage are given when one of them goes off. K2 did go to his room, but kept bouncing out to see the action. He became increasingly excited as the chase went on and as if unable to contain himself he would give our loud shrieks and start to run in a circle. At the same time the 1:1 staff kept telling him to go back into his room. He refused and decided to take a seat on the couch to watch the action. When the runaround kid was finally cornered and returned to his bedroom, Ke quickly de-escalated and went off to his room.

The next visit I ended back up in the game room with K2 and he wanted to play pool again. He started off the way he did before, however when I encouraged him to use the proper end he did, and for the rest of the game continued to use that end. I also instructed him on how to aim and follow through on his stroke. Fortunately his choice to cooperate was rewarded with an improved success in hitting the balls into the pocket. Sometimes things do work out, and why? Just do! After playing with him for a good amount of time I had to go visit two of my other kids and this was when I could see the mature side of K2. He was quite understanding. He knew the kids I was going to meet and he asked me to let him know if I ever needed help with them. Great. Unfortunately, that level of shared care was prohibited. Just one more of the most useful elements of working with kids like this that was not allowed. What could be more therapeutic than to encourage and reward one kid in helping with another? Nothing like having meaning and purpose, and nothing worse than stripping that from someone like K2.

During the next visit I was informed that K2 was out on the play field with his cottage playing baseball. I stood around watching him. He could definitely hit the ball and throw it well. He did struggle with catching the ball. The two teams were made up of kids and staff. K2 played in a cooperative manner, seemed to know the rules and played with a great spirit of enthusiasm. After the game was over he of course helped pick up the plates, the bag the balls, as well as the bats and gloves. I was wondering while he was playing well in this group activity that none-the-less he seemed unable to connect on a one-to-one level with any of the peers. Again, I wondered if this was a consequence of "being the father" in his house with him taking care of his younger siblings. Maybe he just never had the opportunity to be a kid. I did observe him playing Uno with one of his peers at a later date, and he played well and within the rules. When the kid had to go off to another activity K2 was willing to play with me. He again played by the rules and didn't seem upset when he lost or overly elated when he won. A good play partner.

On some of my visits he was clearly moody and didn't want to relate. He was very clear about this, stating just that. He didn't want to relate. The first time he did that it took me by surprise and I placed my hand on his shoulder, in a friendly manner. He didn't respond as if it was friendly. He flinched and shook my hand off and then ran off.

The 1:1 brought him back and was told to use his positive communication skills which he did. After speaking with me briefly he reiterated that he was too uptight to relate but would hope to be more receptive on the next visit. I praised him for how well he communicated and also related that I hoped that our next visit would work out.

When I returned it wasn't going so well. I was told that he had been very uptight the previous two days, with episodes of aggression and having to be restrained. When I inquired as to the cause the staff related that it seemed to be initially connected to a phone call he had received from his father during which he was told that because of problems at home that neither he nor his mother would be able to visit. The therapist happened to be at the cottage also and he told me that this happened every once in a while. He also shared that K2's father shared "too much" of what was going wrong and it overwhelmed and overburdened K2 so much so that it led to him decompensating and "running amuck." The good thing was that by the time I visited he had calmed down considerably. We went to the gym and played the game 21 and after a while I was able to get him to run through a few drills that were designed to help him with his dribbling and passing as well as his lay up. He actually was quite cooperative. When a few more boys came to the gym two of them challenged me and K2 and we played against them for some time. This seemed to be a bonding experience for us, working together and being on the same team.

Unfortunately on the next visit he was having a hard time again as a result of further bad news from his father. It seemed that his father was in an auto accident and totaled the car. The outcome of this was that K2's parents wouldn't be able to visit for a while. He lost it when he heard this and some time later ended up chasing a female staff with a broom and trying to sweep her out of the room, literally. Eventually he calmed down and went with a staff into his room. However, a short time later he began to escalate again and again the staff was able to get him to calm down. But, this time the calm down went into a severe depression, then into distressed crying.

Toward the end of the episode he actually began to speak of his parents and how much anxiety was in his life due to all the turmoil in the family. I spoke with him and the staff and suggested that the staff might view the first signs of negative behavior as K2's signal of his need to connect and that it would be beneficial for staff to initiate 1:1 contact by giving K2 a task that included working together with the staff. This suggestion was accepted. OK, some progress. Makes a lot of sense that after working with a kid for a number of months that his episodes can be predicted and because of this, an intervention to interfere with the cycle could be easily implemented.

Again, the problem is that the staff is constantly changing not only in personnel, but in the times and days of the week that they work in the cottage. So, what one staff discovers as a helpful intervention or style of interacting is rarely communicated to any other staff. Furthermore there is a lack of a means to set up an individual approach for a kid so that all the staff would work under the same game plan. This is really the outcome of poor staff supervision and education. Change this? Not when there is a hierarchy and each level defends itself against the input of the others. That's why I call it an institutional setting. It looks good, but it has the anchor of rigidity and self-protection with a resulting high degree of staff turnover. Sucks.

You know, I was thinking about the detachment of staff which is a result of the "rules of engagement." The rules of engagement prevents the emotional connection. I mean what is the purpose of an emotional connection. It allows the presence of empathy.

I wonder how important empathy is in a meaningful relationship and I wonder what's the effect when empathy is prohibited? Empathy not only promotes a sense of intimacy, a willingness to be open, but it also is the main avenue for recharging one's energy. Why the high level of burnout experienced by people working in institutional settings? No channel for recharging.

There's more to it than just that. The very structure limits the ability of all levels of staff to engage at the personal level where therapy and other forms of care can be effective. In my experience, the most effective, compassionate and empathetic of mental health workers burnout and though they don't quit because they don't want to lose the benefits that come with long term employment they do however opt out of direct contact with the kids, and move up the chain into administration. At this level they make more money and then, as is natural, they rationalize their choice by believing that the administrative work supports the efforts of those still in the trenches.

The problem is that many of those in the trenches are also in the process of burning out and the level of their professional effort diminishes year by year as their motivation to work with the kids is affected. It's quite frankly demoralizing having to accept all the limitations to emotionally connecting with the kids caused by liability issues and the need of the institution to protect itself against lawsuits. I understand the need for ethical boundaries for there are always a few that will cross the line, but to penalize all the staff and the clients in the need to protect the profession against the actions of a few peers is really self-defeating, but as usual, understandable. Lawsuits are a part of being willing to do business. That's what insurance is for.

Like with A and other clients, what K2 needed wasn't available and that was nurturing and a respectful emotional connection with at least a couple of staff that were assigned to his cottage permanently. So to get that connection "by any means necessary" he periodically cycled into aggression that allowed him the intimate contact of being restrained by multiple staff, a staff that weren't encouraged or allowed to relate in a more meaningful manner. Aggression as previously stated is very intimate and provides the feeling of connection even when experienced in such a negative manner. Get it? Get it now?

The struggle I had with working with K2 was that of course I needed to work with him so that he understood the need to follow the rules. That's why I work through sports when I can, because I can teach the value of rules in play much easier than the abstract rules of relating to authority. I taught him the value of warming up so as to get the body prepared for the physical interaction about to occur. I taught him to think of the outcome of passing or not passing the ball in context of the other players. However the transition from playing sports to living in the cottage where the concepts of rules, being aware of antecedents and being aware of outcomes are the same, it just wasn't supported in the cottage. To be fair, as noted above there were a couple of staff that eventually were willing to reinforce these lessons, but most of the staff was oblivious of their peer's effort. So ridiculous that I come into their setting with a degree of expertise, that's why I was there, and yet that expertise isn't recognized and so I was never allowed to address the staff at one of their meetings. OK, take what you get and there was still my ability to speak to them individually, but with no teamwork allowed...Phooey.

Still each time I was with K2 I spoke of self-discipline, of making choices, of anticipating outcomes, of the value of allying with peers, and of learning how to

communicate verbally so that he could seek help when he felt overwhelmed. He was always polite and attentive when I spoke to him of this and seemed to appreciate my effort to help him.

The trouble of having the staff shift around because of scheduling became my “cause célèbre.” That’s French for a “worthwhile cause.” I hoped to identify the few staff with whom K2 had the best relationship and seek to make them our ally so that no matter what schedule they were on that they would be following the same game plan. The initial challenge was to get them to commit to volunteering to be K2’s 1:1 staff whenever they could. Most of the staff sought just the opposite. That’s because the kids that are on 1:1 staff restriction are also on the most restrictive program, often not be allowed to eat meals in the cafeteria instead being restricted to meals in the cottage. Of course they weren’t allowed to going on outings or to special on site events. Being a 1:1 as practiced in the cottages was boring and just punitive. One had only the “poop” to work with and none of the goodies. So getting this kind of commitment needed to be spiced up. To me nothing is more spicy than to have a challenging game plan.

I had a plan for K2 and it needed the cooperation of staff. Normally when a staff is assigned as 1:1 the only plan is containment. This is the lowest level, kind of like a jailer. The stuff that was needed was to turn the 1:1 into a therapeutic worker who had specific goals and methods to achieve a better outcome. I started by teaching the 1:1’s that to learn these skills was equivalent to learning the skills of therapy and would be highly effective in promoting their career goals. Most of them were aiming at becoming social workers.

I started out by asking the staff to come up with a specific and reasonable goal to attain when working with K2. For sure, the most demanding need that K2 had was to be able to connect with peers, for he was completely isolated in this area. As I reported before, he was always willing to play games with peers, but he had no friends, and had no one just to shoot the fat with. It was important for staff to identify a peer or a few peers with whom a possible friendship was possible. Then the staff needed to establish a setting where the peers could interact and discover the joy of being together. This required the staff initiating the contact, setting up the environment for contact, and to be available for constant reinforcement during the effort. I suggested that the staff and K2 first engage like I do in a few 1:1 games, and then to introduce peers to their game which would provide him with the continued support of the staff until the connection was bonded. I worked “my magic.” Then for the first time, a certain 1:1 staff was willing to join K2 and me in the game. Up to this point, this 1:1 staff always refused to join the games that I played with K2. This entry of a staff was a big boost to K2. He loved being with the staff, no matter what they were doing.

Eventually the staff began to get the idea of how this worked and then chose a peer to join the game. Soon it was two-on-two basketball with the teams shifting around so that the two peers were joined together against the 1:1 staff and myself. Within a few weeks we added two more peers and then we had three on three games. With each addition K2’s sense of connection, value, and identification increased with the results that his time in the cottage was less and less staff directed and more and more time was spent with peers. With this connection in place his sense of loneliness which was still prevalent in many aspects of his life, began to moderate. The staff and I were still parental substitutes, but his need to be with staff declined to a more healthy level of interaction.

With this expansion of his social contacts, so too did his aggression decline. He still had a few episodes and while some were still intense, they became more spread out.

As K2 became more willing and able to engage with peers and to become more interactive with staff that allowed for positive interaction the goal became to help him transfer this new found ability from staff and peers to interacting with his parents and siblings.

As K2 became more relaxed his ability to process some and to integrate certain concepts improved. It was my opinion that some degree of his inability to converse and to verbalize in conversational form was due to the high levels of his emotional trauma and stress. It was clear that his main goal was to be reunited with his family and so I became quite focused on presenting this to him and asking him to define how this would ever take place. K2 and I discussed that in order to get somewhere there has to be a path to travel. I asked him to help me to explore the creation of the pathway that would lead him home. But before I really could do that with him I decided to spend some time exploring with him how he ended up at the County children's home.

It caught me by surprise when he insisted that he was placed in the home to protect him from local gang members who had issues with him. I tried to reason with him explaining that children are not brought to the County home for that reason, rather placement; being taken out of the home was a result of some kind of misbehavior by the parents that led the social worker to decide it would be better for him to be somewhere safe and secure. He denied that his parents had done anything of the sort.

K2 then changed his story to one that left him solely responsible for his placement saying that he didn't cooperate with his parents causing them to have to discipline him physically. The family was from rural Mexico and it was likely that corporeal punishment was the norm in that culture, however unacceptable in our culture. None-the-less in a way he's was kind of right in this. In the end it really was K2's responsibility to learn to behave in such a way as to not trigger the physical response given that his parents may be too limited to make the change.

"You know K2, that it's tough for your parents in so many ways. From what I know they are from rural Mexico and didn't have much education."

"Maybe."

"Well I'm sure that there must be some differences between the way kids from where your parents are from are raised compared to the way kids from here are raised. Can you think of any differences?"

"You hit your kid here and you get in trouble."

"That's right. In America, while disciplining children by hitting them can be very effective for some children there's also a lot of times it isn't. Some kids just get more defiant the more you hit them. Other kids just get depressed. Besides it's illegal and leads to child abuse charges such as was done in the case of your parents."

"My parents are going to classes."

"That's great that they are making it to the parenting classes. That will help get you back with them. I wonder what you can do to help this happen?"

"Behave."

"That's right. I know you can get along with some people even though with other people you have some problems. I wonder what makes it easier to behave with some people and not others?"

“Some people treat me with respect. They let me help. Others don’t and they make me feel bad and angry.”

“Wow. That makes a lot of sense. It’s just too bad that you can’t always be with the people who allow you to participate and feel good. Still, I wonder if that is possible.”

“No.”

“Yeah, that’s the truth. It isn’t always possible to be around the right kind of people. So, I guess the problem is to be able to decide to behave around even the people who don’t understand how important it is for you to be helpful. I know that the first response is anger. Still, what I would like to help you learn is how to manage your hurt feelings while you try to communicate to them your need to feel meaningful by being allowed to help.”

“Ok.”

“You know, it’s all about making the right choice and then having the will power to follow through with that choice. Having self control is often called “self discipline.” That’s the ability to keep your self on the right road and to work through the obstacles that you find on the way. But still it’s not fair to put all the burden on you, so that’s why it’s also important to make the decision that before you respond to being hurt that you seek out the staff that you feel are on your side and ask them for help managing the situation.

“OK.”

“I wonder who on the staff that you feel are on your side?”

“Maria, Derek, and hmmm, Kevin.”

“So when you’re angry and before you respond what can you do to get help?”

“Ask them to help me.”

“Right. Asking for help is using your positive communication skills. That’s what staff is asking for you to do. You know, once you start to be able to do that, then this will be a skill that you can carry into your home when you are reunified.”

“Who can help me in my own home when my parents don’t understand?”

“Well, when you go back home you still will have your therapist and I may still be involved so you can reach out to me also. You might also be able to speak with your teachers about your problems and I’m sure that they will help you get in touch with your therapist. The important thing is not to react before you get the help otherwise it’s very possible that you might end up back here again.”

“How can I learn to control myself?”

“Well, self-control is really hard, however learning to manage yourself is quite a bit easier. It all starts with doing things that will help you even when you don’t feel like it. Like choosing to warm-up before playing basketball. You don’t like to do it, but at the same time you know that it will help you play better. It’s hard to understand why you don’t want to do something that will help you play better, but many people feel the same way you do. So the starting point of managing yourself may be to start to be willing to warm-up when we go to the gym. Anyway, that’s what I know will be helpful in supporting your goal to have self management skills and discipline.”

“Ok. Let’s go to the gym.”

I began to lobby for greater teamwork hoping that the cottage supervisor would be willing to schedule one of the three staff with whom K2 had a close relationship as his 1:1 at the times I was working with him. In this way I was attempting to have at least

some of the staff be in position to reinforce the work that I was doing with him, and hopefully I would be acting as a role-model to these staff. I spoke with the Sr. Social Services Supervisor about this need and he related that he would speak with the cottage supervisor about arranging the staff's schedule. A few days later I had the chance to speak with the cottage supervisor and was informed that he would support the idea of placing a "friendly" 1:1 staff with K2 when I was working with him, but he wouldn't guarantee any degree of consistency as to that scheduling. Hmmm. In fact it turned out that my conversations had no effect on the staffing of the 1:1. It was just as before. Why? I had nothing to lose by trying, but obviously I had crossed a parochial boundary by going over the head of the cottage supervisor when I spoke with his boss. Human nature isn't always pleasant.

The next time I spent time at the cottage I was informed that K2 had trouble in school and had to be restrained and placed in the Blue Room. I was also informed that he had calmed down and wouldn't be a problem any more at night because his medication had been increased so much that he was, ha ha, too "tired" to stay up.

As I shared earlier some days K2 was very open to me and other days he didn't want to relate. On one "good" day he was just laying out on his bed when I came to visit him. I sat down on the corner of his bed and just out of an impulse I began to tickle him when he didn't respond to my presence. He started to squirm and to roll up in a ball and I heard him trying to repress laughter, so I tickled him some more and he started to howl with glee. I kept this up until the 1:1 poked his head into the room and told me that I wasn't allowed to do that...you know, to touch him. What's the harm? No harm, just the rule. OK. After he unrolled himself he showed me a Lego set that he had received and it was of a basketball court. So after laying out the parts according to the shape we worked together to put it together. Afterwards we played with the action figures playing a game against each other. To our good fortune, the 1:1 staff had to leave for some other duty and one of the staff with whom K2 has a good relationship replaced him.

The three of us then went out onto the field and threw a football around. Soon we had K2 running patterns. Running patterns can also be therapeutic, especially for a kid like K2. The patterns are a form of discipline and in the case of football they are concrete in that they are run. This is body therapy. When the body is involved it becomes concrete and once the patterns are run successfully I then work with K2 and role model to the 1:1 that the achievement can be transferred into social relationships. Social relationships demand a generally strict protocol of patterns. Following these protocols allows for a greater positive interaction with whom one is relating. It's also true for adults, whether the adults are parents, teachers, staff, or employers. Learning the patterns that lead to success is critical. While I was explaining this to the staff, K2 was with us, listening and he witnessed the staff's enthusiasm in learning this strategy in supporting and reinforcing verbal instruction with physical interaction. After all, isn't the point of instruction to be able to carry it into reality, or the physical world within which we live?

I'm going to repeat this. I often found it difficult not to criticize the staff and the seemingly inadequate training and role-modeling that they receive. However, it's not really fair to criticize them because it isn't as though they and their supervisors are lazy or don't care. The struggle is the result of poor overall concept that comes from the dichotomy of viewing the children as the victims of abuse with the concomitant emotional trauma and yet the operating system for providing care was modeled after one

developed for juvenile delinquents. Also it would be helpful should it be recognized that most cases of child abuse aren't the result of parental choice. In my experience these behaviors are rather the result of a lack of parent training that our culture fails to provide. It's strange that this training is a requirement before the parents can be reunified with their children once the child is taken away from the parents. I mean just like in driving a car in which driver training and passing a test is required before its legal to drive, wouldn't it make sense to require those who would be parents to complete training and obtain a license that gives permission to the bearer to become a parent. Also currently there isn't a readily available support system that parents can easily access when a situation begins to become difficult. It's only available after the situation has already occurred and the episode is reported to Social Services or Mental Health Services.

OK, of course rules and regulations are necessary, but as said before the system of care at the County home was designed for juvenile delinquents. I can accept that in their proper environment that the reward and punishment/consequence system of care might be effective for some, but with the population at the County home these rules and regulations only act as a trigger to many of the children. The kids come with problems and aren't having tantrums because they are oppositional, but have them as a result of their little nervous systems having already been overwhelmed resulting in inadvertent short circuiting. The tantrums also come from their unfair treatment and it is unfair to punish children for experiencing trauma from abuse. I mean how can they be expected to behave well when they are in such turmoil. How about some T.L.C., (Tender Loving Care?) It's so easy to say, "Of course it's OK to be upset...just don't act out in the process. Try doing that some time when you are really pissed off. Talk the talk, but you got to be able to walk it also before you lay it on someone else, especially a kid. What's that about walking in the shoes of someone else before you lay any trips on them?"

K2 has come from a "gang" environment where eye contact has a lot more meaning than it does to other kids who come from middle class environments. Eye contact is often a challenge and is responded to as such. So needless to say there was a kid in the cottage who was from a rival gang. So on this day the cottage was scheduled to go swimming and K2 had fortunately been behaving well for the previous three days so he was able to go. I went along and watched. Staff did well when the rules were reviewed before any of the kids were allowed to get wet. I had my swimming trunks with me and so with permission I entered the water also. I played catch with K2 for a while and then he wanted to hang out in the shallow end with the other kids who were playing volleyball. I got out of the pool and stayed around for a while to watch him with his peers. He played well as always, being careful with the smaller kids and holding his own in play with those his own size. It was very encouraging to see him just relax and after a while I left. The next time I saw him the staff told me about the incident that occurred soon after I left.

K2 got into it with the kid from who also was raised in a gang neighborhood. As it happened they got it on over some pool toy. As both boys had 1:1 supervision they were given verbal commands to separate and to get out of the pool. The other boy complied, but not K2. He refused to leave the pool. At this point a whistle was blown, the signal for all the kids to exit the pool. K2 still refused to get out. By this time the life guard informed him that if he didn't exit the pool he would lose privilege of being able to come to the pool. Still K2 refused to get out and just swam into the deep end and stayed in the

middle. OK. Enough. The lifeguard, the only staff in a swimming suit entered the water to remove K2, but just the lifeguard getting into the water was enough for K2 to get out. So, as per protocol, two staff moved in on K2 and attempted to physically escort him back to the cottage. However K2 just dropped into dead weight. A third staff came over and they basically carried and pulled him the rest of the way and deposited him back into the Blue Room. The staff related that as is typical for K2, once he was placed in the Blue Room he relaxed and soon was able to come out and change into dry clothes.

In reviewing the episode it was clear that having to remove a kid from the pool is dangerous for the kid and for the staff. However there didn't seem to be any protocol for such a situation. I suggested that his 1:1 be required to be in a swimming suit and it wouldn't hurt to have the 1:1 engaged with the K2 on some level, as I had, so that he feels that presence. I also brought up the regular conflict that K2 was having with the other boy and that it would work out better should K2 and the other boy have pool time split so that neither was in the water at the same time as the other. I made another suggestion while I was at it that rather than having staff "extract" a kid from the water, especially a boy as big as K2, that it would be better to call the fire department and have them involved. This would alter the circumstances as significantly as if the County Deputy Sherriff who is assigned to the County home had been involved. None of the kids gave the assigned Deputy Sherriff any problems. The last suggestion was in regard to reviewing with both boys in advance, that the staff was aware of their conflict and to review the rules and negative consequences of a failure to comply and then have their agreement before allowing them the privilege of going into the pool. The staff nodded their head appropriately, but it didn't go anywhere. It sounded so good too. Oh well.

On a positive note, during the following visit one of his favorite staff was assigned as his 1:1 and the staff related that in fact that he had been using my input of teaching K2 self discipline through sports and had been insisting that he warm up and run the practice drills before allowing him to play a game. It was working he said and he felt good about being able to be effective with K2. Ok, things can happen sometimes. During this session the 1:1 and I worked with him on the rules of various basketball games. It seems odd but most of the kids who come to the County home really don't know the rules of most of the games they play.

Rules are structures that allow people to engage with a minimum of conflict. People who "cheat" cause conflict and at the same time what is viewed as cheating may be just the result of the participant actually not knowing the rules and feeling too embarrassed to admit it. Feeling embarrassed, they cover it up with breaking the rules as if they are doing that on purpose and then they just start breaking the rules to preempt the feeling of embarrassment. I also notice this happening. Lots of the kids not only do they not know the rules, they really don't have the general skills to play the game competitively with those who have had coaching and parents who were more involved with their development. They don't understand why they don't have competitive skills, but they do know how it feels. It feels like crap. They want to play, so without changing the rules by "cheating" they really don't have a chance in their play. This all makes sense, so somehow in working with these kids my work includes letting them know this and that it isn't fair, but I am a person who can help them get up to speed. So this is what I then shared with his 1:1 and when working together with K2 or individually this was our emphasis. Guess what? It works.

The following month K2 was observed to be able to play more within the rules and as his skills improved his sense of self-esteem improved and so did his ability to play. He started to be able to dribble without fouling, he could make adequate passes, and his lay-ups started to string together so that it was pretty much guaranteed that he would score. Great and what's more, the 1:1 staff also began to feel his own morale pickup and his motivation to be engaged with K2 became more meaningful as well. Did the good word spread to other staff? It did to some degree, but still it didn't penetrate deeply enough.

A few visits later I was told of another incident with the boy with whom he had the trouble in the pool. It seemed that while showering K2 started to bang on the common wall to the shower next to his in which the other boy was also taking his shower. The other boy attempted to be cool and not respond, but eventually he too became aggressive to stop K2 from what he was doing. It wasn't clear what the staff was doing up to that time. The peer was escorted to the Blue Room which as it turned out shares a common wall with K2's room to where he in turn was escorted. So for the next hour both boys were banging on the common wall, neither responding to their 1:1 admonition to cease their behavior. At the end of an hour K2 suddenly collapsed into a fetal position, started crying and banging his hand repeatedly against his ears. The staff entered his room and he eventually calmed down and related that he thought the boy was going to beat him up and so he got frightened.

It's a little strange as that it was K2 who had initiated the aggressive behavior by banging on the common shower wall. Maybe it was just being so vulnerable, being naked and all and next to his "enemy" that brought all of this on. He probably thought that his aggressive behavior would protect him and intimidate the other boy and when that eventually failed, he fell apart. It must have been like being caught in quicksand, fighting hopelessly to get free only to find that one is getting drawn down even further. How sad. It's really hard to know what is going on inside of K2, or any of the other boys.

One of the most positive elements in working in the County home was my relationship with K2's therapist who was assigned from the Health Care Agency, rather than being the cottage social worker who is part of Social Services. I understand that the social worker is mainly focused on getting the kid placed and has little time for providing therapy. The therapist from the Health Care Agency is completely focused on therapy and works hard with the kid on a limited basis for that purpose.

On one evening when I came to visit K2, his therapist was already engaged with him sitting on the floor together building a lumber mill from a set that the therapist had brought. K2 was very focused on what he was doing and he wouldn't interact with me. However the therapist encouraged him to allow me to assist and he agreed. Because the notches in the logs were cut too shallow it took a great deal of delicate fine motor coordination to successfully make the construction work. The therapist assisted K2 in forming the logs into walls, however the walls kept collapsing. I spoke up then and suggested the placement of a crossbeam to support two walls so that they wouldn't collapse. It worked. I then praised K2 and thanked the therapist for allowing me to help them as it increased the teamwork and we could each benefit from the help of the other two for each of us had something of value to offer. During the work that we did in building the barn and the corral K2 started calling me by one of the staff's name. He had been having a great deal of trouble with that certain staff. The therapist inquired as to

why K2 called me by this other person's name.

"Because he looks like him."

I proposed the possibility that this may be one reason for the contradictory responses that K2 had toward me; sometimes being open and other times being closed. K2 only smiled and didn't reply. As time went on K2 continued not being very open to verbal exchanges. So in non-verbal K2 language his smile could have been his agreement that he was confusing me with the staff. This was troubling in that his confusion as to identity seemed real to him. This could be part of his processing problems that may be affecting a great deal of his social interaction. As it turned out on this day I had brought a gift for K2 and after we successfully completed constructing the barn and corral I handed him a Lego box of a car. K2's response was very mature. He thanked me and reached out his hand to shake mine in appreciation. However, before we could assemble the car he was called to the front desk as his parent's were waiting for him for their daily visit.

So at this point I began to have a clear feeling for some of the instigating problems that led K2 to short circuit. It seemed that his aggression related to one specific peer and to certain staff. Most of the aggression took place after dinner when there were no structured activities. It was clear that the staff had no specific strategy to help interfere with this cycle nor any instructions to keep K2 and the peer with whom he struggles apart. Also in my point of view K2 only appears to instigate all the episodes of aggression with staff. Given the protocol for responding to a client's failure to respond to a verbal directive from staff this in and of itself initiates a progression, each step of which triggers further resistance and culminates with the staff being required to engage physical restraint and the following escort to isolation in the Blue Room. Once the escort and placement into the Blue Room is completed, often this further escalates some of the kids until they become exhausted. At this point the nurse injects a sedative and the client becomes compliant enough to return to his room where they pass out. Because it appears that the client upon awakening has normalized, this outcome reinforces the appearance that the protocol is effective. The staff writes their reports of these incidents as unprovoked, spontaneous and unpredictable, however in review they are quite predictable and they always occur with the same staff.

What was of particular concern to me was the final stage of the last episode with the peer with whom he struggles, when after banging on the common wall back and forth he ended up in a fetal position crying and hitting himself on his ears to block out the sound of the peer who continued to bang on the common wall, and then expressing his fear of being beat up. This suggested a form of PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I was determined to bring it to the therapist's attention and to seek a positive response to this possibility.

Shortly after this but before I could meet with the therapist I was informed by the cottage social worker that the K2 had been diagnosed with both a visual and auditory problem and was now waiting for his glasses and hearing aide. What? This is just coming out and he's been in the County Home for how long? Non-verbal because he isn't really hearing so well and doesn't really know what he is being told, and did he ever hear the staff's directives that triggered his "defiance" and was it that he just never heard what had been said? How many confusing incidents of oppositional behavior was really a defense response to the staff restraining him; it feeling like a gang attack. Wow.

I brought this all up to the therapist, but I was informed that due to his frustration

with working with the staff and the general type of programming at the County Home, that he had been granted a transfer to a different position and would be leaving at the end of the week. OK. I guess I start all over when the new therapist is assigned. Maybe it will be better and maybe it won't. Just have to wait and see. It's a bit of a strain having some idea of what the problem is, knowing the interventions that will help, and yet having absolutely no power to be sure they are followed. This is some form of spiritual training in keeping involved regardless of the obstacles while maintaining a certain degree of mild detachment so as not to be overwhelmed with the odds and for it to result in burn out and demoralization. OK. Yep. Sure enough. And what of K2?

What is consistent in his life at the County Home is that there is no consistency in staff. Trust? How is K2 supposed to develop positive social relationships when he can't depend upon anyone in his world to be there for him without the anxiety that at some point sooner than later, they won't be there? I guess we all share this to some degree or other, this sense of loss, but because we are supposed to be well adjusted we don't descend into depression as deeply and as easily as a kid like K2.

The funny thing is that as each new staff begins to interact with him they expect him and all the other kids to respond in a positive manner. This completely denies the reality of these children's life experience. These high expectations for K2 are very unreasonable, but people being people they usually react in a similar pattern when a kid doesn't respond to their outreach. The staff and the kid's struggle with attachment and each in their own way resists making the connection because it historically always results in emotional distress and even trauma when the attachment is broken through no fault of their own. The kids learn to be defensive, and yet the professionals, including me are constantly working to break those defenses down so that we can feel meaningful and competent. It's not right, not fair, and we should be somewhat embarrassed. Even though I rail against the custodial attitude the staff so often given the situation it's probably more healthy for the kid so that the relationship is not emotionally imbued with affection and therefore not so painful when it is broken by circumstances of programming such as a staff transfer or the eventual placement of the kid. I guess it's all about balance. Really it just all is so twisted and wrong.

A new therapist was assigned and I helped introduce the therapist to K2. A moment of insight. Although I had witnessed his limited conversations with his parents were only in Spanish it should have clicked in my brain that K2 might have some English language problems even though he had been attending a local public school before being taken from his home. It suddenly hit me that K2's seeming inability to express his feelings could also be a consequence of a limited English vocabulary. The new therapist who happened to be bilingual was like some kind of cue for me leading to this insight and so I asked the therapist to relate to K2 in Spanish. Presto...lights went on, trumpets blared...K2 responded with enthusiasm. Gee...Duh.

Toward the end of my time with K2, and there is always a time when my relationship with my kid ends, he at times was able to share some of what was really bothering him. We somehow came to a point where we were able to discuss his explosive anger and aggression together. Eventually it came out that he was carrying a burden of guilt that related to something that he did that he felt resulted with him being placed in the County Home. He was convinced that he was the cause of the breakup of his family and this was one of the major causes of his breakdowns. A wave of despair was always

on the horizon ready to engulf him and to drive it away he acted out to draw staff into intimate contact with him as he experienced during the restraints. With the staff physically draped all over him, he felt safe and secure, and that's why after the restraint he was perceived as calm and then cooperative and interactive. This developed into a cycle which provided him with the emotional connection through the physical confrontation that was so essential for him to hold himself somewhat together. I shared this insight with the new therapist hoping that it would provide her with some leverage to connect with him.

In my final meeting with K2 he was attending a gathering of the therapeutic team in which he was involved in a discussion about what it was going to take to finally place him. During this meeting I lobbied for and was supported in my suggestion that there would be a benefit of having him being provided a Neuropsychological Evaluation to help determine the degree of his brain processing deficits and the result of which would provide a series of recommendations to remediate those deficits. I also mentioned the need to take into account of his need for glasses and a hearing aide and that he might require special instruction in Spanish to overcome that deficit. A further suggestion I was able to make was wherever he was placed that it would be helpful to have a full time Spanish speaking aide to support K2's use of the proposed interventions that would assist him to succeed in placement. My time with K2 was up and it just kind of ended like that. There was some talk of having me continue with him after placement, but that never happened. Once again a detachment of the attachment and that's the way it goes in this work.

8. S.

OK. Well, OK really isn't OK. It's really about Far Out, or in this case, Far East. An eight year-old Taiwanese child diagnosed with Asperger's and ADHD. Speaks English and Mandarin. His father speaks Mandarin and Taiwanese and some English. Not a good situation, for it isn't the professional thing to do to refer a client whose parent isn't fluent in English to an English only speaking worker. That worker would be me. Like how am I supposed to communicate with the father and isn't it essential that the parent be engaged with the use of the interventions to alter the dynamics in the home? Oh yeah, the dynamics in the home. The application inferred and the initial interview with the therapist stated emphatically that S was terrorizing the adult world with tantrums that went beyond verbal and physical aggression into the range of rages.

Well, am I not just the best in my field and so what's this but another challenge that will lift me to even newer heights of professional competency, or something like that? Anyway, even when my clients and their parents speak English fluently that never meant that they communicate clearly or that they can actually automatically comprehend the input. Believing that only leads to failure. My premise, even when they are "fluent," is that they can neither accurately nor clearly communicate their feelings or experiences and definitely they don't seem to initially hear exactly what I am saying. So, what's the big deal? So the father doesn't speak or understand English well; at least that will make my effort less confusing as compared to when I actually believe what I am saying is being heard and when I believe what I am hearing was actually meant. Right, even for me, it is not always accurate to believe that I am hearing correctly and probably this wonderful state of communication doesn't have a chance to happen until I really get to know my client and their key family members. I mean how is anyone supposed to know what someone means in regards to feelings and perspective when we really haven't spent the required time to get to know what each other means when we say something?

So, what was it like? On my first visit I was greeted warmly by S and with a larger than life smile from the father. The father in his broken English, I guess that's how you put it, (or would it be more culturally sensitive to have said "limited, or very limited English.") apologized for the condition of his apartment. He related that they were moving soon; so the mess. Actually they didn't move for over a month. The kitchen was completely inundated with unwashed dishes. The living room was sparsely furnished, with only a card table, two chairs, an easel, a TV and a laptop; actually two laptops. Later on my way to the bathroom I saw the bedroom was completely covered with clothes as was the bathroom when I used it.

Upon reentering the living room S challenged me to a game of Hangman. He didn't play it in the typical way of just a bunch of letters that make up a word. It was more a group of words that had to be guessed. The cool thing about it was when I was eventually successful in guessing all the letters, the words were a greeting, "Welcome to our home." Naturally when it was my turn, my words spelled out, "Thank you for welcoming me." S thought this was very funny as did I.

The father was calmly watching this. S then challenged me to play a game of 21 or Blackjack which the father participated in. However when I won three hands, won

them even when I tried to lose, this irritated S, who complained, “You are winning all the time.” Well, three in a row isn’t winning all the time, but I empathized, and replied, “I’m surprised myself at how lucky I have been. If I was dealing instead of you, then I suppose you would have won the first three games.” This seemed to mollify him. He did win a hand or two, but when he lost two more in a row he jumped up and started to yell about how unfair it all was.

“S, cards, cards are fair when there is no cheating going on; they just fall the way they do and with a game like 21, well, basically the cards define the outcome.”

Some typical behavior: Win...Happy. Lose...watch out buster! The boy calmed down and rejoined the game, but as soon as he lost the next time he “went off the edge.” He started to get agitated, well it was agitation, but it looked more like action/reaction. First imploding with his body stiffening up, his arms becoming rigid, hands clutching into fists, eyes starting to bulge, holding his breath his face started to flame and then he exploded as he leaped up knocking his chair over and in a stick like manner started to dart around the room shouting, “I’m no good. I’m bad. I can never do well. I’m worthless.” His father started to get up to contain him however when I signaled him to remain seated, he did. S then turned abruptly around and darted into the bedroom slamming the door as he went inside.

“Sorry. So sorry.”

“It is upsetting to see him do that. I am not sure that spending time with him just yet is a good idea. Let’s just let him calm down.”

The father gave me a big smile while nodding his head. Great. He’s able to follow my verbal cues. No point in jumping up to try to calm S down; it would just probably trigger a greater escalation.”

A few minutes later S came back into the room. “All right. I’m better now. I’m ready to play the game again.”

Really. Just like that? Hmm. OK. Why not? Go with the flow is my motto. You know it’s fascinating how I can get caught up with a saying like “Go with the flow.” When I first came across this I was just getting into Eastern philosophy, way back in the 60’s while going to the University in Berkeley. I heard it. It connected. It flowed right into me. No big deal...just go with the flow. Sounded so wonderful, so wise, so...just right. So, right on, I got into the flow...wherever it took me it was the way it was supposed to be. I lived within the flow for decades until not too long ago and then, well I suppose I must have opened my eyes to my mind and it flowed back to me, “Go with the flow unless the flow drops over a waterfall.” Epiphany!!!

I never could figure that out when I was younger because it never crossed my mind to figure it out. It never even crossed my mind even when I was “maturing,” assuming that ever happened. Then in one tremendous intuitive moment it suddenly came to me. Hmmm. It happened like this. A bit uptight. Alright, cool out. Got to go with the flow. Sounds good. I started imaging myself just floating down this idyllic river laying out on this giant leaf...you know in the flow; in the flow for years and then for some life saving reason a faint roar began to penetrate into my consciousness. Hmmm, what that be? Suddenly I grasped the significance. Waterfallllll. Go with the flow? Um. Ugg...I don’t feel so good about this. Oh, hi di ho...I guess I’ll just paddle to the river bank and walk a bit... on solid no flow ground. Yeah, maybe on the other side of the fall, get back onto my leaf and back into the flow, but how many times in my life have I stayed with

the leaf going with the flow shooting Class 5 Rapids or hey, what's was that...only to find my self flying downward from a great foamy height none to happy with the sudden change in my being. SPLAT, or if lucky, just a giant body jarring belly flopping KERPLOP.

Guess what? S wasn't really ready to resume playing...he was just getting ready to really blow. With the next hand he lost and it was like he became one of those cartoon characters that turn into a balloon with a human face and after being blown up a large as possible it jumps loose and rockets in crazy gyrations all over the room bouncing off the walls and the ceiling as the air releases. Never quite seen that before in a kid to this degree. Amazing and then with the final hiss of escaping air he collapsed crazily to the floor, laid out like a pretzel, totally deflated, beads of sweat, breathing hard and dazed.

His father bent down by him and wiped off his forehead and turning to me, "This happens."

Yes, I bet it does. After a while S was able to get up and sit cross legged on the floor while his dad and I picked up the cards and everything else that went flying. S was led into the bedroom by his dad to lie down and take a rest. Then he came back into the living room where I was now seated at the table.

He told me in his way about S's difficulty in going to sleep often staying up to midnight. A lot of this was like in sign language. He told me that he had come to the States so that S could obtain mental health services that weren't available in Taiwan where S was "diagnosed" as autistic. He related that there was no educational format for kids with autism so he brought S and his wife to California where he had read we have excellent services. Unfortunately, his wife wasn't so happy with the idea of being in the USA and maybe something not quite right between her and S's father, and had left him a year ago. He related she left because she felt overwhelmed by S's aggression and couldn't provide him with any sense of security. She also felt it was all so hopeless and that he would never be normal. She just abandoned the family, or so he said. Not long after they were divorced and she quickly married again this time to an American Asian citizen which is leading to her gaining citizenship and resulted in a Green Card for S. I guess being in the USA was part of her plan, just not with S and his dad.

The father related that he had to quit his job because of the frequency of the calls from school that required his immediate attention and intervention. The father was living with S alone...being a single parent. He also related upon questioning that he and S were completely isolated from the Mandarin speaking community because S's behavior was too pronounced to allow social interaction. Translating this into life there was this Asian shame thing, but one never admits one is experiencing that because then one would be experiencing that, an Asian No No. He also related that he usually gave into S before he fell into a full blown tantrum because of living in an apartment and that he didn't want to disturb his neighbors. He also kept socially isolated because he was embarrassed by S's behavior. So, I guess the kid was running the show.

It was incredible that I was able to get his story as like I related above, his English was very poor and every few words he had to pause to find the right word to say by looking up some words on his computer in which he had installed a Mandarin/English dictionary program. Still I am very experienced in listening to people struggle to say what they mean and even though there were significant lapses, I got enough of it to fill in the blanks. I was feeling pretty good about this. Also given that anything I said, the father

was providing some really positive feedback. Yes his expressive English was limited but it didn't appear that his receptive English was bad at all. He seemed to agree with everything I was saying. OK. This can work out.

Well, having explosive tantrums aren't the defining feature of Asperger's or ADHD, but they are often associated with them. As I got more into S he was definitely kind of Aspergery like...in that he talked non-stop when he was speaking and then only about one subject, coins. Kind of like K who was totally tapped out into computers. This was really serious stuff to S. Money, not just coins, but really into coins. Money? On the second visit at the home he brought out a shoe box and from the shoe box he pulled out stacks of paper money, money from Taiwan, China, Vietnam, Australia, and the USA. "Piles of money," says the father, "For his college tuition and only for his college tuition." About \$800 worth when all counted up, which he did, and knew just about where every bill was in the stacks. He also knew the names and denominations for many countries including which countries in Europe use the Euro. Impressive.

Talk, talk, talk, but interestingly and yet not so unusual having some experience with Asperger's, he didn't seem to be able or willing to answer any questions. In fact when he wasn't talking about money and coins he was asking me endless questions with no space between the questions that allowed for more than the first two words of an answer.

He kind of reminded me of M who would ask a million questions and also would not allow for an answer. I mean M's questions were bizarre and ridiculous like, "Would you rather be squished inside a giant vise or would you rather be run over by a train?" S's questions were different mostly about the world.

"How many cars are red?"

"Why are sandwiches \$5.00?"

"Who was the first to the moon?"

I wanted to answer, "The man in the moon." but he didn't give me a chance. He would have liked that answer.

"Where can you find the most ants?"

"When are you leaving?"

So often the kids I work with put out a stream of talk while simultaneously blocking any input that would lead to an actual conversation. You know, it's about keeping their defenses up. As long as the kid is asking questions and not allowing any answers, then he's in control. It's all about keeping in control in any way that they can. Everyone needs to feel that in some area of their life they have some control. Looking at my kid's lives they have no control over where they are living, who they live with, how they are treated, where they have to go, when they have to go, how they have to go, and so forth and so on. So by talking incessantly and by shifting the topic at the speed of light or by stringing together seven million questions...that's what they have to do to feel some degree of control. I can dig this. I mean more than understand this, I admire them for having found at least some tiny space to put their thing out there.

Even though for most people it is a "put off," for me it's also a subtle and somewhat desperate invitation to relate. It's just at a different pace...gross understatement...but true non-the-less.

Ok, what am I going to do while the kid is spinning...can't approach too directly...that never works...got to be oblique like in billiards; shoot off three cushions

and tap. Got to get him coming to me...so I just guess I'll try some stuff with the father and wait for S to clamor for attention. Good idea? We'll see.

So I started to meet with the father before going with the father to pick up S at school. It didn't take too long, but it was strangely difficult to come to the realization that while the father gave the best actor performance of the year in projecting that he understood everything I was saying...nope...just the opposite. He didn't get hardly any of it. Smiling and nodding his head, eyes alert, upright posture...sincerity on his face...man he was great. I had to stand up every once in a while and applaud...or because he was Taiwanese, and don't call him Chinese, I bowed instead of clapping my hands.

What got to him was my frequent referral to him and S as Chinese. Well, that's what the referral information stated.

"Man, We ain't no Chinese. We Taiwanese. Dig" I mean that's not what he said, but that's definitely what he meant.

Reminds me of the time I was hanging out in Oakland.

"You know, Jesus wasn't white...not with hair like wool. Who you know who is white and has hair like wool?"

"Yeah, right...never said Jesus was white...but you know I'm Jewish and some of us have hair like wool...Lots of Ethiopian Jews are that way. I had a friend in Harlem that was a Hebrew for real and he had hair like wool. I'm a Sephardic cross with Ashkenazy...so I got very curly hair...some white and some dark Semitic blood...out of Africa and Europe = Middle Eastern... So not Chinese. Taiwanese. Yes, I'm a man of the World...not just from a Country...Aren't we all just of this World before it got all divided and messed up...down with the Tower of Babylon and look what came of that...no one can communicate with anyone else...you know, not for real." And I guess this is what I'm saying in this part and more of it to follow. Just keep on reading.

Father the actor...actually the hustler...had me believing his illusion...couldn't understand anything much of what I was saying and I would have bet a dollar that he did. Actually this messed him up in the long run because people who had been trying to help him before I came onto the scene actually believed that what they said he understood and maybe that's why not much had been happening for the good for all the time that he had been "getting help."

Getting help, yeah that's what this is all about...us professionals giving help and all "our" clients getting the help. Some of this helping happens like if I was providing a bus pass, or food stamps well then my clients would get help. It's specific, concrete and it's real so that kind of help can be for real. Bus pass...on the bus. Food stamps...food to eat. However, if my help is, "Hey your life would be much better if only you will do what I tell you is good for you," like a preacher preaching religion, or a Real Estate agent preaching appreciation in property...until the bubble bursts, but let's not get into that. Preaching...a good preacher works the spirit up...and it's felt...but is it still there when the preacher walks away? Probably the memory, but not the touch, and it's the touch the people want and so they come back every Sunday for a touch of the spirit...but is it really Spirit or just a feeling that one gets like when one listens to a great piece of music...and preaching is kind of like a great piece of music...it touches the people, but it doesn't stay with the people. That's why people who go to concerts afterwards go to the table at the side of the room and buy the CD. And, you know what? When they play it later...it's never quite as good as when it was performed live. Hmmm. That's kind of the way it is

with helping people. If we're good they and we get this great feeling...but by the time they go home it can't be found especially when they start to tell their family about what they all are supposed to be doing from now on...but no one else was at "church" and so they never felt the spirit and after a few hours the spirit is vanquished under the reality of only being told the way it's supposed to be, and not actually having been taught how to do the way it's supposed to be.

So, here I am with a father that speaks fluently in Taiwanese and Mandarin, languages that I don't know, and me, I speak English and he doesn't get enough of it to make sense of what I am so good at teaching. So do I get to him through S; using S as an interpreter? Definitely not supposed to do that. It messes up the roles. The father is supposed to be the man with all that it means, and then here is his son, who is the one "understanding" and "directing" through his knowledge that the father lacks...not good to do. Better the chaos than strip the father of what little self-esteem that remains with him. And like the father, S gave an excellent front. He, speaking English so well that everyone believes he is fluent...except little by little I begin to grasp that the kid doesn't comprehend much better than his father.

S...at eight caught between not only two cultures, but also between two languages. He was four when he was brought to the USA, started to learn English in school, so he's about a four year old in English. He was four when he was brought to the USA and had the language skills of a four year old Chinese, woops Taiwanese boy. Still, with only the father now speaking to him and not always in Mandarin, and with him responding to his father in English, his fluency in Mandarin of a four year old had been slipping and now he was probably fluent as a 2 year old. A four year old English and a two year old Chinese...not equal to an eight year old's expected language skill.

That's the way of life, isn't it? We're part of someone else's play and have too little control over the plot and the dialogue that we have to speak. OK, so neither the son who appeared fluent in English because he was always talking nor the father who acted as he understood me, got any anything of what I was saying. Also of importance I wasn't sure that either S or his dad understood each other. That really helps to know this and that was what shifted all of the dynamics in working with this challenge.

Normally, we believe that because we speak we can also understand, but we all know this really isn't the case. Still because we're all so deep into our culture and everyone else is kind of in the same boat it really is not obvious. In truth with my English speaking clients it isn't any different. After all is said and done no one really gets anything that is being said...we just try to make something out of it that makes sense to us. But, being objective, just by observing the state of the world...no one understands anything anyone else is saying. Say it now, say it again, say it tomorrow, say it forever and it doesn't matter...no one gets it anyway.

So, with this insight sticking into my brain like an arrow that sticks out of both of my ears...I figured I might as well earn my money and instead of teaching concepts, strategies, tactics of positive human interaction, which to even English speaking folks is incomprehensible, I decided oh well, I might as well just start from the very beginning and teach some of the basic words and just stick with that until I hear the bells ringing that the Messiah has come to Earth to take all of us good souls away...and so that is what I did.

I didn't teach, "My name is _____." or, "How are you? I am fine." No, I taught

the words of relationships like: family, father, mother, child, daughter, son, stepfather, stepmother, step-brother, stepsister, half-sister, half-brother, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, cousin, duty, loyalty, obedience, social skills, strength, cooperation, teamwork, self-esteem, nurturing, intimacy, empathy, sympathy, share, vulnerable, appreciate, courage, patience, calm, relax, introspective, insight, intuitive, tuned in, support, encouragement, antecedent, anticipate, outcome, trigger, anger, frustration, resentment, tantrum, internalization, projection, defense mechanism, intervention, transition, plan, organize, structure, boundaries, self-discipline, defining, shaping, framing, trust, independence, sustaining, maintaining, integrating, formulating, feedback, listening, viewpoint, struggle, consciousness, subconscious, unifying, harmony, vision, fear, inhibition, apprehension, anxiety, self-doubt, deflate, magnifying, diminishing, diminishing returns, intimidate, defiance, ignorance, marginalized, understand, misunderstanding, confused, discouraged, demoralized, depressed, detached, defuse, de-escalate, aggressive, argumentative, discussion, discourse, processing, neuron, neurological, neuronets, genetics, visual, auditory, sensory, cue, overwhelm, inundated, cycling, chemical imbalance, perseveration, perseverance, preventative, self, self-destruction, and self help skills.

Get a hold of these words and you kind of have the foundation for checking yourself out and how you are doing, and what kind of work you might want to do on tuning yourself up. I wonder in what grade these words appear on the spelling list?

You know, it occurs to me that we use all sorts of words, and we know their definitions and we use them more or less correctly, but then I wonder, do we really know them as the next person knows them? I mean, like in general no one is really challenging me on my use of the words like those listed above. However, in all of the relationships in which I have been in there are times when communication seems to take a hike. "Where'd it go? Don't know, but it's not here." So, when I'm "teaching" the father these words, and he is looking up their definitions we spend time discussing them in our broken but somewhat effective system of communication, that's kind of what we ended up doing.

I mean, in my life, had I ever sat down with a person with whom I was in a committed relationship and actually gone through key value words and explored what each of us understood about them? No I hadn't. However, when my friends translated the communication skills material into their native language it did become clear that without that process no one really knows what the other person means by what they are sharing. I mean my translator friends kept coming to me to ask what I meant by a certain word or phrase. Then they let me know that there was no literal translation for any of what I wrote and so they were going to have to put it into some form in their native language that captured the meaning. Oh Yeah? Now, how was I supposed to know if what they "captured" was what I had meant? No way to know. Just assuming that conflict is a result of miscommunication...and who would contest that, is it also possible that it's not a simple case of miscommunication, but the misunderstanding, confused, discouraged, demoralized, depressed, detached, defuse, de-escalate, aggressive, argumentative, discussion, discourse, processing, neuron, neurological, neuronets, genetics, visual, auditory, sensory, cue, overwhelm, inundated, cycling, chemical imbalance, perseveration, perseverance, preventative, self, self-destruction, and self help skills. We're just operating under the incorrect assumption that we are speaking the same

language and that the other person actually understands the words that we are using to communicate what is meant. That's what upsets us, isn't it? It's the frustration that comes from our assumption that they should understand what we have said.

It's all so clear to me now and I have taken it to heart that I don't have a clue as to what is the other person's understanding of the words that they are using and nor do they have any idea of what I mean in my use of words. This now leads me to assume from the very beginning that until I do understand their take on the words, that I have no idea what is really being communicated. Of course it helps if the other person or person has that same insight or understanding already operative. I wonder how venturing into this process would help to alleviate the confusion that occurs so often in relationships?

Committing to this effort of clarification helps me slow down from moving quickly in the formative stages of a relationship. Now I really seek to get to know a person so that I can grasp their history and to get some feeling for how it all influences their perceptions. Seems so complicated. I suppose it is, yet however complicated it is, it is knowable and worth the time because I really am sincere in getting to know the person and determining how to share part of my life with them in a good way. You know also while it does take time, it takes far less time than just diving into a relationship with no map and just ending up terribly lost and then struggling forever to find the connection that initially brought us together.

So, with his Mandarin/English dictionary program cued up off we went to pick up a word here and a word there and to grasp it's use and the direction it can take us...oh yeah...so he could understand a little of what I was talking about.

A bit of a digression: I then presented the father with support material that I had developed and previously had translated into Mandarin. The person who translated it was getting her M.A. in Social Work and was interning at the clinic at which I was working. She was from mainland China and had been an English teacher at the college level before coming to the USA. As we got to talking it became clear that while she spoke English fairly well, her comprehension was off a little bit. She knew it too and repeatedly shared that while she knew English vocabulary well nonetheless because she was from a different culture, she had no real idea what was actually being said when the conversation wasn't strictly informational.

I didn't really understand what she meant for a long time, but eventually it kind of came to me when she began to misunderstand what I was sharing with her. It came down to feeling words, situations, and relationships that are for anyone amorphous, but especially when two people are coming from divergent cultures...there is no real way to know what's being expressed. Once I accepted this I began to grow more completely into the person I am today. I hope that this is a good thing.

When I first came into the mental health field I picked up a book the subject of which was "Effective Listening." The philosophy behind the development of effective listening skills emerged from the frustration that we can't really listen to the other person because our culture pushes us to want to help and helping means problem solving. So anytime someone shares a problem it shifts the listener into a problem solver needing to come up with solutions and an even more pronounced need for the other person to take the solution and put into effect immediately. Now the problem is that this generates the opposite reaction than what we intended. It ends up with the other person being told what to do and this too often feels like being patronized. Of course the outcome of being

patronized is resentment and now the interaction shifts to one of conflict that adds to the other person's original problem. So, my listening leads to the American cultural imperative to help using the problem solving format which messes up the whole thing. Anyway, the book suggested that instead of problem solving the better approach would be strict empathy; the outcome of which is that the other person feels connected and safe to share.

The author presented empathetic listening as responding with an "I" statement. It wasn't about mirroring which is structured as following:

"I'm angry at you. You never help me when I need it." Mirroring is to reply, "I see that you are angry at me for not helping you." Empathetic Listening's reply to the statement of, "I'm angry at you..." is, "I can feel that you are upset with me for not helping you." Basically it is called an "I" statement, because the reply starts out with the word, "I".

However I found this type of reply a little off especially when including the word, "you." The reason for it being a bit off is that I felt that by using the word "you" the sentence feels to the recipient as an accusation. It kind of feels like I am blaming the other person for being angry. So I changed the dialogue to:

"I'm angry at you. You never help me when I need it."

"Yeah, I get that. I can see how upsetting my behavior has been."

For some reason, by leaving out the word, "you" the person hearing my reply can connect that I have listened, accepted their feeling (even if I don't necessarily agree) and I don't fall into the ego position of being reactive by blaming them for the situation.

Anyway, I found that in an emotional crisis the Empathetic Listening skills were very helpful in connecting people who were in conflict and I wanted to share this with the father who was struggling to communicate in English. Quite frankly, I felt everyone who spoke English was struggling with communicating their intent to people they cared about. So I made up this whole training program for myself with the intent of infusing my conversation with these new sentences, thus leading to a new outcome.

It wasn't long before I was creating dialogues and scenes from my own life's play using this shift in language from problem solving to empathy. It was incredible. The results were so varied from the old way of interacting where I would listen well, but then feel this compulsive urge to share the "solution" to the problem with, "Why don't you do this, or that, or what ever I think will make the situation better." The usual result of that normal cultural response to someone sharing a problem was, "I didn't ask you to help me. Why can't you just listen? Why do you always have to tell me what to do? By using the "I" statement, the empathetic reflective response, but modified to exclude the word "you," it prevented me from problem solving and altered the dynamics so the person would reply with, "Thanks for just listening."

I found it so helpful in gaining at least some recognition for my good intentions that was previously blocked by my need to problem solve that I eventually began teaching it through my job as a volunteer coordinator when I was training volunteers to be mentors to work with children who had serious emotional stress in their lives and were receiving therapy.

Without exception, all the mentors were enthralled with the training program and were enthusiastic in receiving it. This strongly reinforced my belief and actually my commitment to spread the word of this powerful new application of English which was so

helpful in supporting relationships. So when this woman from China starting as an intern with our agency I reached out to her for I could see that she was struggling in her first weeks having already been assigned a couple of clients and not really yet knowing what to do. I had invited her into my office to let her know that she wasn't alone and that I was interested in what she was doing in America and that I was willing to be of assistance.

She was very bright and inquisitive and soon I was share with her about my work and this lead to that part of my work that trained volunteers how to relate to children with emotional problems. Eventually she asked me to teach her the Empathetic English Language program to help her work as a "therapist in training." I was more than enthusiastic. After spending about a half a year working with her practicing this new form of English and assisting her to come up with effective dialogues that pertained to her clients, she was feeling that she could be a good therapist. In gratitude she responded well to my request for her to translate this part of the training program into Mandarin.

I felt that this way of speaking was the solution to conflict not just between people in a family relationship, but for relationships of all types. I mean it wouldn't affect a political reason for conflict, but it would definitely help in interpersonal relationships no matter where in the world. Great. So why not have it translated into all languages?

Initially someone had offered to translate the communication portion of the training program into Spanish. It didn't seem to be a great challenge to her and it was completed fairly quickly. Of course because I don't speak or read Spanish I had no idea of how well the translation went. So I asked a psychologist colleague who was Spanish speaking to read it. She found the communication skills so relevant she asked to edit it. However, she felt that the original translation was as an uneducated person spoke Spanish. She wanted to "bring it up to speed," so that it could be used professionally. I guess in context of where I worked that one relevant purpose of the translation was so that the numerous Spanish speaking therapists with whom I worked could use it in teaching their client to communicate more effectively. A great purpose.

She worked on it for a few months during her spare time and then brought the fully edited edition to me with a smile on her face. She was a wonderful person and I had a great deal of confidence in her integrity. So, it was a big surprise to me when I had made copies of the completed edited form and distributed it to all of my Spanish speaking peers that no one used it, and actually no one even acknowledged the effort. That blew my mind. How in the world could this be the result of such a well intentioned and incredibly arduous effort by the translator and the editor? Got me. Never could get an answer, so naturally I had to make up an answer to reduce the disappointment.

I thought that it must be related to their professional training. The translated material was so effective yet it seemed that this was not the first time that they had been exposed to this style of speech. Could it be that in their education that it had been presented just like all other areas of their education as "study material" that you learn just long enough to pass the test. That's what it turned out to be when I spent time speaking with them about the listening skills. Yes, they had been exposed to it, but never trained in its use, like in actually being required to practice it, just like you would be required should you be taking a conversation foreign language class. Just like everything in the social sciences...most of it was presented without sufficient training and practice to actually utilize it when in professional practice. Pass the test...that's all education has come to.

Then I came up with another rationalization for their ignoring the wonderful translation. Deep down I wanted to believe that if the new language form promoted a reduction of conflict and more harmonious relationships that it could be fully employed especially in the mental health field. But no. So, I drew from an experience from a past professional disappointment when I realized that the deepest purpose of working is to keep one's job, and if one is too effective then one can actually work one's self out of that job...so subconsciously while the intent is to help someone, the deeper program is to maintain them as a client as long as possible and that requires that they are on a very slow train to improving their life so that the therapist remains a vital person in their life. Dependency, if not a warped form of co-dependency. No one's fault. Just...Human Nature. So, no, the highly powerful Effective Empathetic Listening Skills, now translated into Spanish remained in their drawer and never was presented to their clients, even though all I had ever heard was, "We don't have any material in Spanish to work with." Hmmm.

Of course, that didn't really slow me down, because I felt that if the professionals weren't able to snap to, then the world at large could benefit from knowing about this dynamic and so very helpful application of communication. So, why not help the Chinese people get along better. My new friend wanted to be a psychologist and one day return home to open up a group of clinics. Great. Carry it on home.

It took her months to complete the translation and after having the material initially translated into Spanish and Japanese it wasn't really a surprise when she would come to me daily with a word or sentence and ask me what I meant by what I was saying. I guess that's how we got to know each other so well. But you know how when it all suddenly becomes clear but after a while it appears that it's not the whole answer and so with her coming for clarification I began to sense that I was missing something. Click.

Yes my English speaking mentors when in training were very excited and intent on understanding the effectiveness of Empathetic Listening skills, but when I had an honest moment it suddenly became clear that hardly anyone who I had trained used this new English language program with their mentees and almost never in their personal life. They gave the impression that they had understood the words and they loved to hear me speak and share the new language program, but in reality without me present they had no idea how it really functioned and what it really meant.

I now understood that unless two people actually take the time to discuss the meaning of the words that they are using, then they have no idea what the other person really means or comprehends. This being true, how then can anyone use the new sentences that require forethought and purposeful intent. Like you have to know what you intend and then design the sentences so that the other person can actually understand what you are conveying and respond in a mutually satisfying manner. Wow. Too much work. And that's what all the mentors kept saying, "It's hard."

But even with this in the back of my mind there was something working against me remembering this complexity in communication so when I found myself years later working with this Mandarin speaking family I became excited to be able to finally use the Mandarin Translation of my work. At the next meeting I provided my client's father with the translation of empathetic communication skills. He looked it over and then put it down. The following week I asked him about the translation and he looked sheepishly and related that he hadn't looked at it after I had left. I couldn't help myself from

wondering, why he wasn't making an effort to use it. What was interfering with memory.

Writing about this kind of reminds me of another memory thing that now comes to mind. It's about conflict and my eternal journey to understand its origin and function and my drive to develop an antidote to it. It's about my addictive personality, that is currently limited to chocolate. Ok, chocolate isn't so bad, not like other things. However, it's really not about chocolate, but conflict and one day it came to me that there is nothing so addictive as conflict. But after dwelling upon conflict and I still was together with conflict being highly addictive, I sensed that there was an element below, behind, or under conflict that was more fundamental. That's when it dawned on me that the essential nature of addiction is intensity. In my way of living life, I have never found anything more addictive than intensity. Intensity is the ultimate antidote to boredom and there is nothing that drives humans more crazy than boredom.

So it was all about the need for intensity and then I began to look at what creates the highest and longest experience with intensity and it came to me that it wasn't pleasure because as incredibly wonderful pleasure is, it doesn't last a long time. What does last a long time is an unsolvable problem, yet it can't be so unsolvable that one gives up trying for a solution; it must appear to be potentially solvable and eventually within reach.

So why are some mental illnesses so difficult to overcome? In my way of looking at it it's because while the conscious mind seeks healing, the subconscious mind is driving for increased intensity and that subconscious imperative to achieve intensity overrides the conscious drive for health. So this brought me to wonder what if all the problems of life come from the human obsession with experiencing life intensely. At this point I came to suspect that there was a mechanism within the human mind that blocks the significance of this insight because even after sharing about intensity addiction which "should" have a major impact on one's lifestyle, it just doesn't. So I guess it is like smoking.

"Yes, I know that smoking will eventually cause me a serious illness. Yes I love my family, but I just can't stop."

Well, even in the face of a serious illness the addiction overrides the mind's ability to change by somehow blocking the reality of this behavior. So, I concluded that there is some kind of subroutine program in the subconscious that interferes with conscious thought and prevents conscious thought from altering the existing pattern. The result then is that when one becomes addicted it is through this subroutine program that gets initiated through the initial pleasure signal, "Hey, this could be the big one we've been looking for." So, what is initially pleasurable or comforting about the onset of mental illness? I believe that the pleasurable aspects of mental illness is the initial onset of release; release from struggling to cope with an increasingly overwhelming situation. So does the mind set one up to come into contact with such situations so that the part of the mind that seeks intensity can connect? Things to think about or get a better feeling for.

OK, back to the story. So it took some time, like three times a week for an hour with the father and working on the vocabulary words and after the third month it seemed like we could almost converse. Still, for some reason he wasn't using any of the skills unless I was giving him strong verbal and visual cues. Somehow he just wasn't getting it enough to use, or he didn't get it at all. Or, getting it would lessen the intensity of his life.

Actual progress didn't happen until I was able to help him obtain a Mandarin

speaking therapist to work with him on his own issues and then I was able to arrange to meet with the father and this therapist with her translating for us.

“It seems that it is difficult to use the interventions that I am teaching you” while I’m thinking, So why don’t you use the interventions that I am teaching you? Mandarin translation... Answer, “Use them? Am I supposed to use them? You never told me to use them, did you? Just learn them I thought.”

“Ahh, YeaHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! That not be what I am doing?”

Didn’t really say that. I’ve learned to pause before blurting out...OK, is that really what I want to say into the public domain? Noooo. I got to thinking before speaking...hmm, have I really matured that much? Didn’t actually tell him to use them now, I only asked him to try to use them. I wonder what the Mandarin translation for, “Like NOW man” is?

“Oh. OK.”

And that was it...he started using what I was teaching him and things began to get better in the home. Now, how was it that with all the work that we had been doing that he hadn’t understood that he was supposed to be using them. In his mind he could see how effective I was in the use of these empathetic dialogues tuned into communication skills, but by me being so effective with his son, he probably felt that he couldn’t possibly do as well, so why not just wait until I was there to do the work. OK, that ain’t it, but it does have its own logic. “Sure I can do it, but not as well as you” leading to “I feel inadequate when I do it, and I can’t stand that feeling.”

Or, he was unconsciously stretching out the problem in the face of the very solution to that problem. Back to intensity addiction...keep the problem going. Or maybe he believed that if his son got better he would lose his relationship and the support system of which I am a part. Or, maybe for some other hidden reason...I don’t really know. Still, as long as he could claim that he didn’t fully understand, he could just play along. I definitely don’t mean he was doing this consciously. Not consciously. However, once my intention of him actually using the interventions was clearly stated in Mandarin, he had no way to continue “tricking” himself, and because he is a man of integrity, the subconscious drive for intensity lost its complete hold on him, or for at least a while.

“Hey, if you don’t practice how is your son going to have the incentive to practice? It’s only by fumbling along that he will have the role modeling for it to be OK to fumble along. It’s just like learning a new sports skill. If you never fumble, you’ve never carried the ball.” Wise, huh? But you know, even with addiction to intensity out in the open, that wasn’t it entirely. It looks like it is, but it isn’t.

The mind is multidimensional and so convoluted, and so alive that there are elements of consciousness that are probably beyond human comprehension...Know Thy Self...that’s some kind of G-dly Humor. In the West, the home of psychology, it is believed that G-d created us and we are all in the Image of Him. Simultaneously there is the belief that because G-d is omniscient and so forth that actually God is unknowable...that’s why the Jews and the Muslims have no paintings that reflect the actual Being. Anyway, because we believe that G-d is unknowable then being that we are created in G-d’s Image, then ultimately we are also unknowable. Yeow!

Also a part of the Western Culture, there is the belief that G-d is in everything and so in that way then G-d is knowable as we seek to identify and categorize every living and non-animate objects. I guess, even though I’m not a scientist, that’s their

drive...whether they are aware of it or not. They seek to know the Supreme Being through their conglomerate study...of course no one individual can know everything, but working together we as a group intend to not only know everything...we intend to use everything to make us like our "Idol", the Supreme Being. Lofty goal...perhaps a bit misguided, and of course the consequences of believing this is just like the Supreme Being, we don't have to be responsible for when our "experiments" in controlling life mess up. He messes up humanity and He throws the great flood and washes it away. "Woops, that didn't workout well, got to get rid of it."

Now that our scientists are into the genetic levels we have brought our "civilization" to the apex of knowledge and now we are able to not only change life but to create it. So, we'll just follow the role model of G-d and go woops also, Green House Gases and the melting of the glaciers that provide water for over half the people on earth. "Sorry about that." The Ganges is running now only during the rainy season...otherwise only good for a soccer field.

In other belief systems G-d is in everything and is everywhere and therefore everything and everywhere is sacred. I like that. I suppose it's the Western belief that G-d is perfect and that's to me is where the belief system collapses, for it's such an unrealizable state and yet do we all not compare ourselves and those with whom we live and associate to that Ideal? No one can ever be good enough when compared to that expectation. Unreasonable expectations are based on unreasonable beliefs and that's what messes everything up. At least that's one of the key belief systems in which I was raised that led to catastrophes in my relationship with myself and with others for whom I truly cared.

That's what was happening to this father. Single parenting, I mean...not the Whose image are we created in. Single parent and all alone, totally self isolated out of extreme embarrassment and shame in response to his son's behavior. All alone. Exhausted as only such a single parent can be. No knowledge as to what he is doing. Trying his best. Feeling terrible guilt about the whole thing, and I'm wondering why he isn't able to use what I am teaching him. Unreasonable expectation. You know, just when I feel that I'm making progress and know what I'm doing, I find out, nope, not at all, except in the past I wouldn't come to this understanding and now I can...But can I remember to use it...yes, as the teacher, but in his situation, probably somewhat better than the father, but not as fully as I would like. Darn. I can feel at times that life was created based upon an unreasonable expectation or as likely in the effort to find our place in creation we have fabricated a belief system that doesn't really work for our benefit in the long run. Kind of fits.

I had figured out while I was writing my autobiography back in the 80's that my memory wasn't accurate. I mean, there I was at that time, in my forties, writing my autobiography and now a parent with four children and I was writing about when I was a youngster with my butt being kicked and beat all the time...you know carrying those memories along with me like an incredibly bulky and heavy load or something and these memories had been crushing me, bending me over so that my head was face down stripping me of any clear vision of where I was going. Worse, these memories were my filter for how I interacted with new situations...I guess we all do. Is that supposed to make me feel better? Allowing my past to act as a filter to the future before it becomes the present, understandable, but doesn't that taint and constrict the potential for new

experiences? Well I wasn't so happy about the results.

Well, while writing my autobiography I was focusing about one of the times that I definitely lost it as a parent and freaked out on one of my daughters who I found mud sliding down the back hill with the neighbor boy. What flipped me out wasn't the actuality of my daughter mud sliding. Actually I liked her to be adventurous and athletic, but at the moment the sight of her muddy body became the flip out mechanism, the trigger that sent me into an act of aggression. To put this behavior into perspective I was living in a state of exhaustion. We had been going through the flu in the home with each of the four kids getting it one after another, like one a week with all the throw up to be cleaned up and sheets changed through the night, and then my wife got it...Anyway they had all finally got well, and there she was in the rain mud sliding.

I was returning home from work, beat to poop, and when I drove into the driveway there she was laughing, as she should have been, and all covered in mud and I saw the proverbial Red. I leaped out of the car. I wasn't even conscious of getting out of the car and I grabbed her by the pants, dragged her to the house, stripped the clothes off of her, yelling, "Are you out of your mind...blah, blah, blah..." and threw her into the house after washing her off and my wife charging to her defense...and me raging about how I was...you know...No More Flu. Well that's when, in my writing that I knew that my mom, who had been butt kicking from the very beginning, but with five children, and with my father working and never around to help...well the poor woman was exhausted and yet the laundry had to be done, shopping, cooking, cleaning...and with us kids running through the house and all our friends...so that's when I realized that memory isn't a good source for what really was happening because it only showed my perspective and left completely out the way things were happening for all the other players...in this case my mom and her life.

OK, I get it. She beat us and extrapolating from my own abusive behavior in the mud sliding incident with my daughter, my mother was on a hair trigger of exhaustion and there was no relief in sight. It must be terrible to love the ones you're kicking around and you can't help yourself, for that's what it's like to be out there all on your own. I GET It now. Being a parent...I got this moment of empathetic awareness that it wasn't just the way I saw it. Then I got that we are all out there running life through the filter of our memories from what ever age we can start to remember. Imagine having my life run by my memories of when a young child, as an adolescent, or as a young man. It seems that the earlier the memory the stronger the influence on one's current life. That's ridiculous. I would have preferred that my most recent memories, being hopefully somewhat more mature, would be the ruler of memories, but nope, at least not for me, that wasn't the way it was happening.

I also had this insight at some point that we assume that babies don't understand what we're talking about. They may comprehend the tone of our voice, but not the actual dialogue. Is that true? I'm not sure anyone really knows, but in my situation I feel that I understood most of what was being said even though I didn't have the motor development for speaking language. What does that mean? The current studies on neuropsychology and brain imaging is that everything we have experienced, heard or said is actually stored in the brain; we just don't have access to all of it. However, there are people with autism that do have total recall and if they have total recall then it seems that then everything in our past is still in our heads. Now, because the common notion is that

babies don't comprehend dialogues then it's ok to speak about anything in the presence of the baby. Imagine, what mom and dad were talking about that wasn't so pleasant; like all the stresses of their life and the baby is downloading the whole thing while nursing. I wonder what happens to an infant when they are confronted with highly stressful input that they can't get help to process. Is that one place from which a child's insecurities develop? It's my opinion that babies do understand enough of human speech to be overwhelmed with certain topics and that it is never Ok to speak about such powerful subjects in their presence.

Well, with memory being so much more complicated than we could ever imagine or more complex than what we've been told, it was clear that of course I had been off course and didn't have any real clue where I had been or where I actually was, not to say of not truly having any idea how I was supposed to be getting to where I thought I was going.

Memory, the future killer. For S's father I could hear his subconscious moaning, "I've had bad experiences in the past," and now he clothes the future in them...I mean what affect does that have on his future and what it turns out to be, instead of what it could have been? How can the future come to any of us innocent of our memories and if the future can't get through our memories cleanly then what we perceive as the future is really, definitely, ultimately influenced by the past and the poor future never really has a chance to be any different than what we expect, anticipate, and mostly likely fear. Just imagine being the future as if the future was sentient; you know alive and aware. Hi di hi, hi di ho, and then, "Hey what's that dark spot coming my way? The past. Oh, no...OK, I'm all for a transforming experience, but not this way...my life darkens, like between scenes, and as it unfolds it's just a repeat of the past."

Poor desperate soul. So, the subconscious struggles with its buried awareness. I came to understand that when I meet someone I'm not just meeting them in the present, but I am meeting their whole history disguised by the illusion that the present is the linear meeting place between the future and the past. The events in the past are not in the past but riding the shoulders of the experience in every present moment. This impacts the future which is in reality also not a linear line of yet to be experienced events. the future is altered and can never be as it was to be, which may mean that nor can I ever be as I am as I am not really here but just a screen upon which people who interact with me project the essence of their past's experiences. Memory.

So, when memory rules...the future is distorted. After being struck with this insight while writing my autobiography it was kind of paralyzing. I knew then that I would have to inspect each of my memories all over again and make an adjustment for the environmental and contextual influences on that memory. So I took an inadvertent step coming to the conclusion that because my memories aren't accurate, and I'm influenced so strongly by them, I better freeze and not take another step until I get a better grasp on this phenomenon. Suppose that's one of the "realizations" that the Buddha came to sitting under the Bodhi Tree. Ok, Enlightenment if I'm living alone, but not so easy to manifest when living with other's who haven't had the same insightful experience.

"Ok family. We're not going to do anything...we're going to freeze because I've realized that my memories are incomplete and therefore inaccurate and all my choices are based upon my past experiences...so we're all going to freeze until my memories are

adjusted.”

I actually tried that with my wife and children...didn't work and to them I was just becoming too strange. Strange in that once I decided that I better freeze in the sense as if I'm about to walk off a cliff...that kind of freeze...and life was kind of like that with my choices being controlled by infant and adolescent memories. Well, this is kind of funny but not really in the sense of the intense pain that resulted from this autosuggestion that I freeze. So I woke up the next morning not able to move my neck without agony. I couldn't move it to the left or the right or up or down. Just straight ahead.

My “memory” of this was when I wrote my autobiography I had taken a break from work having made a significant amount of money in commercial real estate, my line of work at the time. I was and still am into this Native American thing of not taking more than I need; like kill enough buffalo to feed the family...and even should there be another fifty million of them just standing around, they are left unmolested until the next time my family runs low on meat. So that's how I practiced real estate and spent the rest of my time when free hanging out with my children and doing my thing.

So, anyway while writing the autobiography which took about six months I guess my posture was poor, leaning over the desk while writing and my neck began to hurt. I didn't make the connection between my writing in poor posture and the growing pain so I went to the doctor who prescribed some muscle relaxers, pain pills and anti-inflammatory medication. It felt good, real good, and so I kept on writing. When the pain increased my intake of medication increased and I continued to feel real good. Then with the realization of my incomplete memories which was kind of an emotionally traumatic blow, and my “insight” that I needed to freeze, well my buddy, my subconscious complied and froze me up tight.

It took almost a year to get my mobility back to somewhat normal. Then what was really kind of weird was that when ever I went back to working on my autobiography my neck, shoulders, and back began to burn within a few minutes...so severely that it actually felt like a burn which I could only put out by stop writing...which I eventually did. That's when I learned that the body can choose to separate from the control of the mind. It lost confidence in my gray matter which chose to continue to work on the autobiography regardless of the pain, by using the pain meds. to keep going. The body I learned has it's own level of intelligence and it just up and boycotted the direction of the my mind and instituted a failsafe mechanism to keep me from abusing my neck...the burning sensation. It didn't trust me to use good judgment, and for excellent reason. It knew that my work on my life story was addictive, or at least consuming, and I had no will power to care for myself once I got into writing.

Hey, if what I know was working I wouldn't be in the situation I'm in. So, maybe I needed to acknowledge that what I knew at best ain't cool and it was like destroying my life. So, I guessed I better find someone to teach me how to do this living right...open up enough so that some of the future can become the present, not just a repeat of the past. Cool. Seems like a good thing. I'll do it.”

Weirder and weirder...and a bit frightening.

For me the Teacher turned out to be Intuition...the source of my insights. For other people it comes in human form...not for me, well sometimes it definitely does, but not so much as a teaching to instruct, rather as a teaching that emerges from the chaos of that relationship...so very outside my intent for love, peace and harmony. With the

insight came another little message from Intuition.

“If this insight is so Right, maybe you could ask for the instruction book on how to make this insight a guide to your life.”

“For real?”

“Yes, but you would benefit from recognizing and accepting me as being real and a part of yourself that is connected to The All.”

“The All? Like G-d?”

“Not exactly. I, Intuition am not G-d, for G-d is a creation of a need in humanity. To date there is a great deal of confusion about this G-d as in the past and still in part of earth there are numerous gods and their strength depends upon the number of people who believe. The One G-d is a concept of unification however given the nature of the earth that unification is in a constant state of deterioration as a result of the effect of polar opposites ruling life such as male and female, birth and death and so on. Therefore even among the people who believe in only One G-d, this One G-d has been taken into thirds by the three religions that have this belief, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The outcome of this has been far from unity. The problem lies in that the words of G-d are not directly available to the general population but rather seems to come to an individual, usually a man, and then is dispersed throughout the population.

Because of this there is a never ending confusion about exactly what was said, and more importantly, what it means. Because this is all about interpretation by people, it never approaches the actual statements or meaning of the original moment. Worse, G-d is unapproachable in the physical plane and so it's all about prayer and the response to prayer is difficult to pin point. So, no, The All is not G-d for while G-d often gives humanity direction it nonetheless does not come with instructions on how those directions are to be put into play. I, Intuition or at times called The All is more complete and comes with both direction and instruction on how to live that direction.

I'm approachable and can be directly interacted with and eventually I will not be just the conduit between you and I, The All, but we can merge so that the questions and the answers are all within reach. You earned my attention by being honest in your writing of your autobiography. Honesty is the key to the world of self knowledge. My name is Intuition, that part of you that brings it all together. So how about it? Want to hang out?”

“Sure do. So how do we get to meet, you know not just by accident. I want to hang out with Us more.”

“The same way you just did. By writing. Anytime you want to connect, just take out some paper, with no intention, and take your pen and just relax. In a moment a word will appear in your mind, and just write it down, and you will find that another word will come by itself, and another and soon you will be writing from the place that We dwell. Read it after you stop writing, and as you read you will be discovering the instructions on how to live your life in a good way.”

“Wow, still how do I know that I can trust this experience? It sounds a lot like channeling and I don't have very good experiences with channeling. In the beginning the writing seems so insightful and helpful and then there comes a subtle change from sharing to directing and the directing part becomes more eccentric and then negative eventually edging into paranoia and fear of the future.”

“You are right in that it does sound like channeling and I'm glad that we can discuss this. Channeling implies that it is coming from another source than from you, like

an angel or a spirit or a person from the past. It does use the same writing dynamic to communicate as I am suggesting for us. The main difference from channeling and what we are doing is that the conduit between you and I, Intuition is that with your continued development The You and The All will merge. So it is entirely up to you to monitor and to evaluate what the experience reveals to you and it is ultimately always within your power to engage or not to engage.

“Wow.” And that’s exactly how the future became me and not just my past and guess what, it doesn’t burn my neck when I write about this.

Now, how to communicate this to the father whose English skills are about that of a two year old. How to loosen the hold of the past on the future. I call it Transitioning. “Transitioning” is a powerful word. Ever give it any time to get a hang for how it can open the world to us? Transitioning is what allows a change from this to that. The wonderful part of it is it doesn’t demand a loss of This to get That, but rather it allows for an expansion of This to include That. Transitioning is a unifying concept that supports growth rather than replacement.

That’s the problem. Our belief that to get That we have to give up This. This is because of our “Western” cultural training that we were programmed in as we grew up. It prevents the process of expansion. In our culture either it’s right or wrong, hot or cold, like self-esteem, viewed by our culture as either high or low. A binary system of life...kind of computer like. Sure humans created the computer, but I wonder if over time that the computers are not now programming our children through the games that they play and are starting to use in daily life like the flight of drone planes dropping bombs on people a skill achieved through the war game training of childhood.

Yes, reality is limited to what we believe, so if one’s reality isn’t working out too well, then it’s critical to alter the beliefs. In this case, alter means to expand; like expand our beliefs so that they are more encompassing rather than excluding. So for example is self-esteem really about high or low. No, in the bigger viewpoint, it varies depending upon the skill that we are using and on the environment in which we are working or living. It varies, increasing in some settings and diminishing in other environments. It isn’t a constant. This awareness is very helpful in keeping a sense of balance and self appreciation in place.

A good way to get a feeling for expansion is to look at a tree. Expansion is like the limbs of a tree. Sure the biggest are at the bottom, they were the first. But each additional limb with its life giving leaves are just as essential to the health of the tree...it expands as it grows...it doesn’t discard its lower limbs in order to grow. It knows how to grow well. Nature doesn’t have to be taught...it’s built into it. However in our culture we don’t live as wisely as trees. The only aspect of trees that our culture appreciates is what can be made after they are cut down...except for those “Tree Huggers and such. I’m an “and such. Never made it into Tree Hugging, but I can definitely dig hugging.

“Look at what I can do now.” So many people who have struggled in the past and now have found a shelf to rest on believe that they must rid themselves of their past to have any hope in the future. However the more we believe that we have grown beyond our past, rather than seeing it as a wonderful and essential part of what we are becoming, the greater the disconnect with our history, and with the loss of our history the greater the past’s hold is on us.

Knowing the past gives me perspective and lessens its strangling hold on my

memory. Now, I don't believe my memories, but use them as guideposts to the setting in which these events took place. I expand then from my part of the experience and fuse into the setting and become aware of those others who are interacting with and around me. This provides me with the context of my past experience and it automatically expands my memory and the feelings and "conclusions" that I draw from this process increases my sense of awareness and free will to make relevant and cogent choices in the present and for greeting the future.

This is the big hang up in life, not being skilled at transitioning. Of course that's kind of what developmental stages are all about. Transition into the next stage and one matures. Failing that, one stays stuck. Of course we are born in transition and transitioning does happen automatically until one experiences some level of trauma. Trauma acts as an anchor, stopping our development or at least slowing it down.

Before the first experience of trauma it has been kind of like a child living and working happily and without reservations. The child first experiences the basics, the self-help skills like we do as young children as we're with our parents who are doing tasks around the home. It's not about being told how to do things; it's experiencing it directly with the family into which one is born.

Eating isn't taught...it starts at the breast. It's natural. There is something deep in nursing that not only transfers the mother's immune system to the infant, but from the warmth of her living nipple so flows the security and safety and assurance of life. Being held and cuddled and with the loving response to needs of being cleaned, fed, and played with connects rather than just teaches. The father's presence in the bed with the mother with the baby between them...the infant feels the strength as well as the softness and knows protection promoting confidence in the baby to reach out and be free to respond to the inner torch of burning curiosity.

This allows for the expansion of the baby's world to exploration; touching is safe with the mother, safe with the father, safe with siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins...safe and confidence in being with others and with nature. It thrives. It supports, encourages, and rewards the baby's development and there is fun and excitement in growth...a reflection of health. But...then there is the trauma. The earlier the trauma the greater the disruption to development. If the trauma happens before birth, then the primary fetal development is inhibited leading to poorly functioning neurological systems. Not good. The mother being addicted to smoking, alcohol and drugs is a primary source of this dysfunction. However, I may suggest that should the mother be clean, meaning not addicted or using drugs or alcohol, but have experienced her own trauma or the father having experienced his trauma before inception of her baby it is my belief that those inhibiting experiences of trauma can become part of the genetic coding that influences the development of the fetus.

Heavy isn't it? Trauma isn't just connected to the moment that it occurs as is currently recognized in returning military from the Middle East suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It continues to affect and influence. Imagine the power of multiple reinforcing traumatic experiences such as is experienced by women captured and made sex slaves. Imagine further or recognize when there have been generations of trauma as was the result for African Americans of 400 years of slavery in America, or for the Jews during the Diaspora in Europe where there was two thousand years of persecution and subsequent genocide. It's never ending just ask Armenian or Rawandan

survivors of genocide Yet, we are unaware, unconscious, ignorant of these inherent challenges that each of us experience in life. That's not fair. We need to know this fundamental deterrent to living a healthy life. With that knowledge parents can be prepared and not caught completely by surprise.

So before I can teach the father a new path, I best teach him how to transition and then with that skill in place, I can guide him to the "next chapter" that allows him to incorporate the development essential to improving his relationship with his son. Exciting.

Poor language skills, no big deal, no one really understands what anyone is saying anyway. It's always been about experiencing it rather than being preached or taught about it. So, I became a role model by the manner in which I formed my relationship with the father and by bringing him in close proximity to his son as I included him in my relationship with his son...so that he can feel it, feel it to the center of his very existence. So that's what I did...I reintroduced the father and the son to each other in a good way. Of course that wasn't the whole story. There were hidden aspects that didn't surface right away such as the father's growing depression over the choices he made and the circumstances that left him feeling guilty and incompetent. But more of that later.

There was so much for him to understand about the circumstances and triggers that lead to his son's explosive aggression. Something had happened in the past that left an intense sensitivity that once touched causes the pain to be abruptly released. Such a precarious emotional balance can be so easily upset. The whole thing is not to touch off the powder keg of pent up emotions; emotions that can't be fathomed and therefore there is no slow and healthy mechanism to release the pain safely. That's not possible until one gains a comprehensive insight into the human dynamics that the child has experienced and to do some of that I have always needed to get into the kid's parent(s). Not easy.

The key disablers as I discovered in working with K are feelings of ridicule and being treated unfairly. The safety features that are not provided in advance that shield these feelings are the skills and motivation to plan and to provide adequate transitioning between events. This failure to shield these feelings will result in frequent but accidental triggering and the bullet of explosive emotional release emerges seemingly without warning. If the child lived in a vacuum that would be about it, but because the concepts of planning and transitioning imply this occurs within a social environment it is the responsibility of the adults to provide these essential elements. It is by taking responsibility for the child's behavior that empowers the adults to do something that will shift the balance from chaos to that of order.

I guess the kid's first full blown tantrum in my presence was the pivotal moment in starting the transition from chaos to order. We were at the park. Going to the park, open space, lots of running room...lack of structure in a good way...parks; that's my thing with kids. What's ADHD in a park? Not much. Put that ADHD in a classroom...KA POW!!!!!!! TROUBLE. So, the first step in minimizing the affect of the disability is to open the space and loosen the rules that result in judgment and disappointment. So we were at the park, just goofing around. S was on the giant Jungle Jim climbing and running and ducking and laughing. Then onto the swings where his dad pushed him. No problem. Then out on to the grassy area to throw the Frisbee. Worked out OK. He didn't really know how to do it, but I gave him a demonstration of hand position and the Frisbee no longer went straight up or down, but kind of level. Fun. Then

we played some baseball with me pitching and the dad shagging balls when S hit them.

You know, he stood in the most ridiculous manner but the boy could make contact. When I showed him how to position himself correctly he started to hit the ball with some power. Cool, he has natural athletic skills. It was going so well. Then I shifted it to kick ball and at first he was OK. He really couldn't kick the ball well and I guess he was getting tired by this time, but I didn't really catch that. Anyway I put him and his father into a triangle with me so that we were supposed to just kick the ball between us. He couldn't do it. Woops. Why woops?

"I'm no good at this."

"Hey, you're doing OK." First mistake. I didn't listen to him.

With the next randomly placed kick he was pissed off.

"This is stupid. I'm bad at this. I'm bad."

"Hey little man, its no big deal. Let's just take a break."

"I can only kick the ball eight feet. I need to do it twelve feet."

"Maybe after the break.

He ran over to the ball and tried to blast it, but missed and ended up on his butt.

"I hate this," he screamed. "I can't do anything right. It's not fair." His tone of voice went from loud to shouting to screaming like a jet revving up for take off.

His father just watched. S fell down onto his knees. I was so glad that we're at the park, out in the open space of the park...just a few people walking by...no social pressure to "stop it." I was watching to see when the father would step in. He didn't. S wasn't just plateauing...he continued to accelerate and he became self-injurious as he started to hit himself on the forehead. He was still screaming how worthless he was and was pounding away with greater frequency slapping his forehead with one hand and then the other. The father continued to gaze at this like he was watching something interesting. No emotion on his face...no tension in his body posture...OK, inscrutable Asian or what ever, it was too much. I couldn't let S kill himself as his pounding got harder and harder so I walked with purpose up to him.

"S. It's upsetting. Really upsetting. It's time to cool it." All being said in a low calm and soothing voice. At least to me that's how it felt. It had no affect on S who looked right into my eyes and kept slugging himself. I'm wondering, hmmm, will he be leaving marks on his face...it's red but no cuts...all on his forehead...Ok...but will he give himself a concussion...

"S, you have to stop or I'm going to have to call the police and have you taken to the hospital." He paused. He glared at me. Still he paused. Then his eyes took on a gleam and he smashed his hand against his forehead in a quick staccato of hits.

"That's too much. You're hurting yourself. I'm going to take you to that picnic table over there and we'll have a little chat."

He swung at me as I reached down to take his hands...I easily dodged the blow and took him by his wrists and lifted him up gently. Fortunately he didn't weigh more than fifty pounds, small bones, easy to control. He struggled and I held him, not tightly but firmly, and kept up speaking to him as I walked him to the picnic table.

"I know how upsetting things can be. I want to understand what was so upsetting. I was so impressed with how well you were doing and it was my fault that we didn't take a break between the different sports. You just got tired and somehow lost it."

He was struggling, but not too hard. He must have been exhausted from his

outburst. We made it to the picnic table. His father had followed us and sat at the edge of the table while I seated S across from me still holding his wrists.

“I’m useless. I hate not being able to do anything well. I’m no good. I’m bad. I deserve to die. I hate myself. I hate the way I live. Nothing is good in my life. My mom left me. Why? What did I do wrong? I can’t go on like this. It’s too hard.” All from an eight year old.

“I’m not sure what happened in the past. I know it wasn’t good. Still, I like you. You have a powerful spirit. You have strength and courage. I can’t believe that you struggled with me, being as big as I am. It’s amazing. Still, a lot has been going on and that’s why I’m here. I’m here to help you and your dad live a better life.”

His struggling ceased. He looked at me with tears in his eyes, eyes red and blurry. His dad had picked up his S’s glasses and he reached over and put them on S. Pink glass frames...an interesting selection. I kept talking to him, soothing I hope and he began to respond.

“I would like to let your wrists go but if you need me to I can keep holding on to them. What would you like me to do?”

“Let them go.”

“OK, but when I let them go I want us to go for a walk.”

“OK.”

“Good” and that’s what we did. We walked around the park to the pond where the ducks and geese were waiting for people who were not supposed to feed them, but people did because that’s what you do with your little kids. Go to the park and feed the ducks. He remained calm throughout the walk and then we went to the car and returned to their apartment.

On the way back to the apartment he spoke of how unfair life was and that he had no control over anything. He related that he didn’t understand why the adults have all the power. He related that things weren’t going well so why didn’t adults share the power with kids who might have better ideas. Kind of deep, right?

“It’s hard to understand how life can be like this. I’m interested in how it became this way and I hope in the coming weeks we can all figure it out. I am looking forward to our next meeting and you really can hit a baseball well. I was so impressed. We can continue working on this and soon you’ll be able to play ball with your friends at school.”

Speaking with the father about this incident later was pretty instructive of the challenge I was facing in this situation.

“I was so impressed with S’s level of energy. It really demonstrates his potential. Still, it was very upsetting to witness his struggle. I have to take some responsibility for his meltdown. I should have provided greater transitioning between activities and insisted on taking brief breaks between them. That would have helped.

“Huh? Please, I don’t understand what you said.”

“OH. What didn’t you understand?”

Smile...no words; more smiling, still no words.

“I’m sorry. Too many words?”

More smiling.

“OK, I’ll slow down.” That’s when I really began to understand the depth of his lack of English language comprehension...almost total. So what ever I had been saying before...not really happening.

Back to his computer English/Mandarin language program and the need to develop a way of understanding what he can remember of the words that I had been helping him with. Almost none. So much for “transitioning.”

What can I do?

I spoke with the therapist about the need for an interpreter during the time that I spent with the father. Oh well, not easy to obtain. So, she put in a request for one but time kept slipping on by. Are you getting the dilemma I was in? It was like the movie, “Ground Hog Day,” when each day the progress of the previous day was lost and each morning when the character woke up it started all over from the beginning. Kind of like birth when all the experiences and memories from one’s previous life(s) are wiped out, and we are born once more ignorant and well, back at the starting point, unless of course one is reborn as a worm due to past life’s transgressions.

Damn, thought we had made it past this point. Guess not. Back to the vocabulary list and this time with a big taste about the American culture that makes these words meaningful. Taiwanese culture...these words have a different meaning...all in context as to whether there is any possibility of these words having a use in that culture. Like what is “individualism” supposed to mean when the family may have only just begun to experience this in arriving in the USA? There may not be a translation that relates to daily life in their culture. Then what? In Taiwan...family. In the USA...divorce and isolation. Good grief and how is S supposed to make heads or tails out this mess and how am I supposed to make some kind of order at this level of dysfunction? By staying cool. By lowering my expectation. By enjoying the challenge without focusing on the goal. Back to the drawing board and the next few months just work the vocabulary words and their significance until a modicum of comprehension begins to dawn.

I had a friend who learned Spanish by totally immersing himself in Spanish TV, radio, and books...no classes and after six months he started to spontaneously speak and comprehend Spanish. So, I’ll just lay it on S and his dad as thick as I can and hopefully in a shorter span of time they will begin to get it. Why not? It could work. And maybe it did somewhat.

I remember the first time the father related using the word, “transitioning.”

“I wanted him to stop playing a game and get ready to go to school. So I started fifteen minutes before telling him of the goal and the need to think about stop playing. I provided Transition and it worked!”

“I’m so proud of you. It took a great deal of courage for you to make the effort and well, I’m pleased that it turned out well. It helps me feel good about my work when it actually does help you and your son.”

Smiles all around. One step at a time even when that first step takes three months. It’s OK. Development has it’s own pace and given the circumstances it’s own pace was now. Just imagine if I had lost patience and given up...sometimes it takes a good while in the right conditions, (That being me.) before the life in the seed of a plant can awaken and trust to put out the first shoot. It’s good that I have spent so many years gardening and that’s kind of how I view my work. Sometimes I get a client in winter and I have to remain patient until Spring to plant the seed and expect any growth. Certainly I know better than to dig around the seed to see if it has germinated. That only leads to its demise. Got to be patient for the right moment and conditions to occur before that sprout of life can take hold. Then once it starts it’s months more before it grows sufficiently to

flower and for the flower to meet a bee and then months more for the fruit to ripen and become edible. Not that I would eat S, ha, ha, but for him to recommence growing. The garden is actually his father and the apartment in which they live and until that is put into order, S is restricted in his ability to gain strength and life.

In this case, the garden had to be prepared and all the stones first had to be removed before planting could take place. That was the work of the first three or four months. Just to get the obstacles out of the way. Fortunately, it looks like that has been accomplished. OK, now turn the soil and throw some natural fertilizer into it. Oh yeah, got to have a source of water for irrigation. Time to sow and into the earth goes the seeds. A month later soft green shoots. The garden challenge next. Got to have a way to fight off the bugs who love to munch on nice new shoots. That's what the birds are for and diligence in keeping the shoots free of buggy egg layers that when they hatch under the leaves suck the sap and the plant keels over and dies. It's work, work to have food. It's a garden, organic...no chemical insecticides.

The point is S has something(s) not working and that's his disability. His handicap is how he feels about his disability. If he is brought up in a emotionally healthy family, the handicap will be present but minimal. If the family is emotionally distraught, then the handicap; the negative way S feels about his disability grows and increasingly impacts his welfare, like a cancer that inhabits critical organs. I am suggesting that the handicap acts as a deterrent if not an active threat to S's development and social competency.

This means that when the illness impacts S's health to such a degree that it can be identified by S's decline in behavior the first professionals that come into contact with him perform an evaluation and from this the disability is established and the treatment plan is prescribed. Should the organic approach be ineffective, which would be therapy and special education, then the chemical approach is applied through the psychiatrist's prescription of medication. Sometimes the first works, sometimes the second works, sometimes they have to be combined for progress, and sometimes neither is sufficient to help the situation turn the corner. Just like in life, cancer in children isn't always treatable.

The father's progress, his first considering and then using transitioning to assist the client to leave one activity in order to engage another activity was to me almost a miracle and the positive result of this approach signified a certain amount of growth. Provide transitioning and reduce the probability of a tantrum, not bad. And yes as stated above I was encouraged. The father then began to use other interventions that progressively reduced the conflict within the home. I worked with the father on "backing off" and to not micro-manage the client with endless series of directives, "Do this, do that, don't forget to do this, you forgot to do that, it wasn't done well, do it over, can't you do it by yourself, etc." The more he backed off the greater the peace in the home.

One day he informed me that there had been no incidents of aggression in the past few days, and then he told me some time later that there hadn't been any incidents of aggression in the past week, and then in the past two weeks, and then in the past month. Wow. Just by backing off and providing transitioning. The situation improved further when I taught the father how to give a choice rather than to ask the client if he wanted to do this or eat that.

"You have a choice. You can either have noodles or rice. Tell me which one you

want for dinner,” instead of, “Do you want rice?” “No.” Then, “How about noodles?” “No.” “I want to get McNuggets.” “I don’t have money for that.” Tantrum. “OK, let’s go, just don’t be so loud.”

With transitioning and choice giving we then experimented with planning and setting boundaries and structure.

“OK, we’re going to the mall this afternoon. Let’s make a list of what we want to do and from that list we can choose one or two. Now when we go, we’re going for two hours. Twenty minutes before we have to leave I’ll let you know and then I’ll let you know ten minutes and then five minutes before it’s time to leave. So whatever you are doing you will have plenty of time to finish up. We also have \$10. to spend and so it can be spent on one or more items, but the total can’t be more than the budget. Now, before we get there we’ll review the plan and the budget and to make sure all goes well I would like you to keep us on course.”

These structural changes shaped the client’s behavior to acceptable levels. I worked with the school through the therapist to provide structural changes that would provide the client with a program that was based upon his disability rather than their attempt to keep him mainstreamed because they felt he was so bright. Their intentions were great, however the placement of S who had been diagnosed with Asperger’s in a regular class with thirty other kids was overwhelming in that it was overly stimulating and the time frame and lack of transitioning for tasks were insufficient for the client often leading to aggressive reactions. When the school changed his program to provide the client with three sessions a day with a smaller class specially designed to work with other peers that were also experiencing social ineptness, his whole life at school altered from daily episodes of aggression to no episodes of aggression.

I furthered the structural dynamics of his day by having the father enroll S in a Y afterschool program that was designed for children with disabilities. There were less than ten kids and usually staffed with three adults. After an adjustment period S integrated well.

With the changes at home, at school and with the introduction of the Y program afterschool S’s behavior in each setting was acceptable. It was a success in the light of the outcome of these changes. However progress was suddenly difficult to maintain and the deficiency was in the area of the father’s vacillating emotional state which dipped into deep depression often immobilizing him from performing the simplest tasks in the home. This onset of inconsistent use of the interventions that previously had such a positive affect on S upset the proverbial apple cart. After making so much progress and it lasted for about five weeks, S’s behavior began to “regress” at home with what the father reported were attacks of manic behavior in which the client couldn’t control the racing of his mind, thus preventing him from eating correctly, sleeping, and a general mental disorganization that prevented him from doing normal self help skills like washing his face and hands or brushing his teeth without his father’s assistance.

“My” construct of structural changes were still as effective as ever however just like driving a well tuned car, if the driver has poor driving habits then it would be ridiculous to blame the car for going off the road. In the father’s case as the driver of S’s home life it became clear that there was a direct ratio between the father’s inability to maintain and support the use of the interventions and the subsequent collapse of S’s behavior once the support system was weakened. It is difficult to appreciate how helpful

structure and boundaries are to the welfare of children if not also of adults. It is too easy to point at the improvement in the child's ability to cope and assume that the child has learned how to behave more socially appropriate. This may be true in some cases but especially in S's situation given his diagnosis of Asperger's it wasn't exactly the way it was.

It is my experience that structural changes have to take place first and this improvement in the home life can eventually support an internalization of that structure, but it takes a long time for that degree of healing and growth to take place. The point I'm making is that most of the improvement was due to the structural changes and when the father was no longer able to maintain those structural improvements there had been insufficient time to allow S to sufficiently internalize the concepts upon which the structural changes were made. Thus S's regression as the father fell into depression.

Still within this imagery of gardening, a goal that I had established, which in this case wasn't reasonable, required a tremendous effort into assisting the father to become a proficient gardener so that when I would eventually have to leave, he would be able to stand guard of the garden, that being S, and effectively nurture and protect S while he made progress in his own life. This new pathway hopefully would one day allow S to morph from a garden plant into the gardener of his own life. This would imply that he might be able to eventually internalize the interventions to use them with his self and also to instruct others on their use when interacting with him. This coupled with adult self help skills might lead S to one day become independent enough to live a healthy and productive life.

Was this reasonable? I don't actually aim that high but I do work hard to see how far along that path my client's can go, and to make sure that they have the support systems in place to keep them safe and healthy. But of course there are factors that are beyond my scope of work. The initial variable that presents the greatest challenge is always the parent(s). In S's case his father. His expressed intent of coming to the USA so that S could obtain a higher level of care and education than what was available in Taiwan was admirable. However it was so poorly planned and so deficient in support systems given the tenuous nature of the Immigration Laws, the evident lack of commitment from his wife that ended with her choosing to leave the family, and the tenuous nature of his job that he subsequently lost.

Perhaps the most crushing variable was how this led to the family's complete isolation from social interaction. This isolation perhaps was cultural in that having a disabled child, the loss of his job and wife which resulted in him becoming so full of shame that he was emotionally unable to integrate into the Mandarin speaking community that had successfully immigrated. In short he had lost his foundation and was foundering, and more so as time went on. This was the tide I was working against.

Basically the family was in flood waters and my purpose was that if I couldn't arrange to "save them" at least I could get them to an island in the flood and then go for more help. I believe I achieved that goal, but my dilemma was could I leave them without their interaction eroding the shores of the island leaving them vulnerable to being swept back into the flood

It kind of reminded me of a cartoon. A snake was swallowing a frog. The bottom part of the frog was already on its way down and only the head was still showing. A fly flew by and as the frog was being swallowed the frog's tongue shot out and snatched the

fly. So, the father was the frog, the snake was his depression and I guess S was kind of the fly. They frog was going down and pulling his son down with him even as he struggled to be free. As the father collapsed emotionally so the structure in the home disintegrated and with the increasing crumbling of the structure, so S who had been doing so well began to experience increased anxiety leading to the manic episodes, a precursor to a further collapse resulting with the re-emergence of the aggressive behavior.

One day we went to the park as we do once a week. We go to the park to work on S's coordination and sport's skills to enhance his ability to play age appropriate games with his peers. This of course results in increased confidence in social interaction and an increase in his overall self-esteem. A great plan and goal. In the beginning these outing were always fraught with tension as S couldn't stand doing any activity in which he wasn't proficient. This is normal with the kids I work with. No one has spent time with them learning sports while their "normal" peers have had parents who emphasized this development. This disparity is crucial in preventing my client's from wanting to interact socially. They feel inferior, and in a way, they are right. So overcoming this deficit is one of the foundations upon which other progress is based.

In the beginning S refused to engage in any sports but he would climb somewhat awkwardly on the Jungle Jim and so we started there. He tried the monkey bars but he failed quickly not having the strength in his arms and hands. OK, starting is starting. He wanted to play basketball...really? So we did, and the kid as small as he was could put the ball through the hoop. I was amazed. Then he challenged me and his father to a game of Horse. Make a shot, the next person has to make the same shot. They miss and they get a letter; in this case an "H." Who ever misses five shots first, "Horse" loses. If they make the shot then the next person has to make the same shot as the first and second. When the ball makes the round the first person can make the same shot again or change it. Or something like that.

Well, to play with an eight year-old kid it's important to play easy. So, I did, but not his father who played to win. What? I missed the shot that S made on purpose and then his father was free to make any shot he wanted and he did from the free throw line which was outside the range of S. Of course S missed. He wasn't happy. Eventually S missed another shot, and as I had found out on the first day when he challenged me and his father to a game of Black Jack, when he lost a hand or two he freaked. Stand back, and that's what happened.

I looked at his father with a deepening sense of foreboding and went over to console S.

"Hey, it's tough to miss a shot and I can see how upsetting it is. I wonder why we are playing this game. You're a kid, we're adults. It makes no sense to compete against us. Let's just shoot around...no competition. What do you say?"

"I can't play, I can't do, I can't win."

"S, it's not always about winning. It's about playing. How about it buddy. Just shoot up and don't count how many shots are made, just work on your form."

So we did and that lasted about ten seconds when he started to miss the shots he could make earlier.

"Hey, S. it's important to take a break every once in a while. We all get tired after any effort, so taking a break and then coming back to the game is OK. Come on, let's all go over and sit on the grass for a while."

He fell down on the asphalt kicking his feet and waving his arms while crying out, “It’s not fair, it’s not fair.”

Oh well, so I turned to his father and motioned him to do something. Just wondering what he would do. He was very gentle, squatting next to his son trying to soothe him. Eventually S got up and we went for a walk. On the way I again expressed the benefit of taking a break when things are not quite going his way or anyone’s way. I don’t know if he heard anything or not, but he continued to walk and that was good.

You know, what was encouraging was that a week or so later S was kind of asking for a break when his shot got poor. So he could get the concept, if not immediately, then sometime later as though he needed to process the concept before he could use it. That’s the way it works when it works. Next I introduced the concept of “satisfaction.” He didn’t know what that meant and so I explained it. He still couldn’t grasp it and then with a stroke of intuition, duh, I asked the father to explain it to him. It was fascinating. As soon as his dad began speaking in Mandarin S immediately began to relax. In a moment or two he came right over to his dad who was sitting on the grass and laid up against him with a smile of contentment on his face. Sure enough, a week or so later, he got it.

“I played well and I got a sense of satisfaction.”

Next we worked on “Reasonable Expectations.” This was a challenge. “Yes, you want to continuously improve. Any good athlete has that as their goal. But I wonder at what pace this improvement can be expected. To me, when I’m with you it seems that there is the expectation of rapid improvement and when that doesn’t happen frustration builds up and then there is a lot of yelling and swinging body parts. I just want to share that nobody improves rapidly at a new sport. It takes work, patience, good coaching, and a sense of appreciation for the time it takes to get better and for the effort being made. That’s what is missing here and that results in unreasonable expectations. Instead it is important to lower one’s expectations so that they are realistic and with realistic and reasonable expectations one can feel good even when the progress is at the normal slow pace for improvement.”

That was a lot to share and I kept reinforcing the concept and eventually S was talking about setting reasonable expectations so that he could experience satisfaction. With this laborious approach the positive outcome was that I then realized that his English comprehension skills in the area of feeling words was deficient and maybe in Mandarin these words are not available as they are in English. I began to seriously wonder what else he didn’t get that most people thought he got because his expressive English gave the impression that he was getting it. It came to me that he really didn’t understand most of what people were saying to him in context of a norm of reasonable expectations. He set his expectation so much higher than the adults intended and the inability to reach those expectations were a major cause of his tantrums and aggressive behavior.

The kid was a time bomb of overwhelming frustration ready to explode with the right provocation. He went major one time when he had earned fifteen minutes of free activity for behaving well during the previous hour at school. He chose to do a math puzzle. The kid excelled in math...and this connected to his love of coins. Anyway, he underestimated the time -- or more probably the thought never was considered by him or his aide -- that it would take to complete the math puzzle and so he wasn’t finished when

his aide informed him that he had to stop. (No effort to help him transition.)

“I’m not done.”

“There is no time to complete it now. Perhaps you can finish it when you earn another free time.”

“I’ve got to finish it now. I can’t leave it unfinished.” (Part of Asperger’s. It’s so hard to remember S has this disability. Wonder why.)

“I understand that you want to complete it, unfortunately that can’t happen. We have to follow the rules.”

“The rules are “unreasonable.”

“No they are not. They are the same for everyone and you have to learn how to follow the rules and fit in. If you keep this up you won’t get another free time today.” (No empathy.)

“That’s not fair just because I don’t agree with you.”

“That’s enough,” and she reached out to take away the math puzzle. Guess what happened next?”

“Ladies and Gentlemen, children of all ages, in the center ring I want to bring your attention to S who is about to be shot out of an emotional cannon. I suggest that everyone stand back.” KA BOOOOOM!!!

Kind of predictable don’t you think? Tantrum, someone attempting to calm him down which further accelerated him followed by someone trying to restrain him resulting in him kicking and punching and grabbing, and then breaking free and running out of the room tearing his clothes off, a shoe over here, another shoe over there, a shirt picked up by the wind, a pair of pants dragging around his ankles and his underwear down by his knees.

Wow, the crowd went wild. What a circus under the Big Top.

Maybe it would have been useful for the aide to help him before he started his math puzzle to puzzle out the boundaries of the activity like how long would it take to complete and whether there was sufficient time to achieve that goal. Nope. Nope and Nope again. Not the aide’s fault...it’s the fault of faulty training.

So when the school psychologist was telling the father about this and I was there with the father to pick S up as I always did on the day the three of us were going to spend time together, it became instantly clear that the school had an inappropriate placement and educational plan for S. Anyway, later while we were walking around the park I began to review S’s episode and inquired of the client as to whether he had set reasonable expectations when he chose to do a math puzzle given the limited time factor. He thought about it and that was good. The following week he began to speak about reasonable expectations, the components that make up a reasonable expectation and the need to be accurate so as not to blow it, and he meant BLOW IT. Pretty impressive for a kid.

He was getting it and he did begin to internalize some of it and at a pace faster than his father who well, was struggling a bit. So I next introduced the concept of Antecedents and Anticipating Outcomes and how important those concepts are to successful social interaction. Wow, and wow. Getting pretty sophisticated. It was just taking off. I was so anxious for some sign of progress at this time so that I could justify extending the services. So much time had already passed with just working so hard to get some sense of foundation in place. I was granted another two months and during this time things just better and better until there were no longer any episodes of physical

aggression at home.

As stated above with some suggestions to the therapist the school altered S's program and started to adapt their schedule to his needs. In his normal classroom he was stacked in with thirty other kids. As K would say, "Not good." The change in his program had him going to a separate classroom with five other children who were having "adjustment" problems and the focus was on social skills. He attended this class three times a day which provided him with the necessary breaks from the larger classroom and allowed him to have the focused attention that he needed in order to feel safe and secure.

Simultaneously with working with the therapist to help alter his school schedule I was advocating for S to attend a Y afterschool program that was designed for kids with emotional problems and would provide another setting for him to engage with peers with the necessary staff support. I was successful in my lobbying and after I spent time with the Y staff helping them to be aware of the S's history and then making suggestions to accommodate him, he began this program.

With the change in the school program and the introduction of the Y program, S's behavior began to moderate significantly. Ah ha, progress and importantly in my line of work it was measurable and so things seemed to be going really well. Usually when the behavioral goals have been met my services are ended and I go on to work with another kid and family. You know, if I had stopped like I was supposed to I could have walked away with a Gold Star or two. But my expectations had also risen with the family's progress.

During this time I had also been lobbying for and had procured a Mandarin speaking therapist for the father who could also act as an interpreter for me. With her help I was able to meet with the father and actually get my points across and he could too. This was to be really helpful and so instead of stopping like I usually do, couldn't stop now, not when everything was getting really good. All I can say is "Whoops."

I would like to preface the following with the old saying, "Too much knowledge is folly." I think that's how it goes, but anyway it's close to what I mean. Now in this case how can too much knowledge mess things up? Well, remember the father was quite weak in English and the client was quite verbal and so everyone believed that the father was the one deficient in English comprehension, which he was but then I had discovered that the client wasn't doing much better than his father comprehending almost anything that was going on. As a result I began a campaign to "educate" the professionals of this insight that while the client was quite verbal his comprehension of words and concepts that required an understanding of feelings and social situation was almost totally absent. So I wasn't sure that this was a result of Asperger's or the consequence of being brought up in a home where social isolation was the norm. Kid's learn from their parents and I began to feel that the skills of isolation was what S had been learning at home. This is where the effort to help in the home became suddenly increasingly difficult.

When I started to interact with the father in the presence of the interpreter the stuff that makes us human, which would be our experiences and the related feelings, began to be exposed.

I guess what I am suggesting is the illusions that hold us together, which for the father was to always project that he understood what was being said to him, dissolved and what he really didn't understand started to become evident. I mean was his reason for coming to the USA solely motivated by his desire to help his son or could it also have

included he felt that he couldn't remain in Taiwan any longer because of the shame he and his wife had been feeling having a disabled child?

At first having the use of the interpreter helped a great deal in communicating the nature and use of the interventions and a result of this was the correlation to the improvement of S's behavior. However with the interpreter in place I began to investigate the lack of consistency in the father's use of the interventions. The result of this inquiry was the revelation that the reason for his inconsistent use of the interventions were underlying unresolved issues that he had buried deep in his psyche. Especially his relationship with his ex-wife who still had such a big affect on S was a subject that was tearing him apart. Also, the fact that he sacrificed his job and left Taiwan and coming to the USA to get services for S was upsetting to him because of such little progress having been made...It seemed like a lot for so little. Thus his initial acknowledgement of his depression.

So little for giving up so much and then does this make sense? It was all so poorly planned, more like a gamble than a plan. The loss of his wife and job and the determination to continue in the USA without any emotional support of family or friends...it wasn't really admirable because the results were so devastating and hurtful for everyone engaged and mostly for S. I mean, his father losing his job is one thing, but the loss of his mother was so much more. It was more like this whole case was just an endless peeling of the layers of an onion. Just when one had the feeling of getting it, it slipped off and away and it was just starting all over again. It was not so much about finding out what was hidden because there was no end to the hidden.

It reminded me of this movie I once watched when I was a lot younger about a man opening an oyster to discover the find of a life time. A giant pearl, perfect in all aspects except for just one tiny almost infinitesimal blemish; a dark spot. As it was the pearl was worth a great deal. He took it to a jeweler who wanted to give him more money than he ever had, but he was also told that if the pearl was shaved, just a bit, the blemish might be removed...or the shaving might reveal that the spot was just the top of a greater blemish hidden inside. To make the story suspenseful he decided to go for the fortune that would be his should the shaving remove the spot. Of course it didn't but revealed that the blemish went deeper than the surface. At each stage the man had to decide to take what was left, still worth a goodly sum, or go deeper. In the end...just a pile of shavings...the man deep into his cup at a bar.

There is the infusion from an outside source, that being me, that bolsters a family. With the improvement the goal is then to gradually withdraw leaving the family sufficiently skilled and secure to maintain their progress largely independent of outside assistance. This is really an unreasonable goal for the families with whom I work for even though this is the operating system for the provision of mental health resources is it a reasonable goal given the depth of mental illness that brings such families to our services?

I believe that the family continues to need services and support to maintain their gains from the intensive and relatively long term interaction from professionals in my position. Because the my type of services that I provide are completely cut off when I leave the case it isn't uncommon for the family dynamics to decompensate. Too often I hear somewhat later that the client eventually was removed from the home and put into residential placement. Was this inevitable? Was the progress that the client and their

family an illusion held together only by my presence? If so, then what was it about my engagement or style of engagement with the family that altered the dynamics such that considerable improvement was able to be made resulting “in my services no longer being needed?”

Was it just a type of mechanical service or was the progress a result of the combination of experience, skills and attitude that I provided? Usually it a type of Temporal progress because the change while real is not based upon an independent foundation. These family need the frequent input of a “family manager.” It’s kind of like what happens to a good orchestra when a really wonderful conductor is hired. The same musicians that make up the orchestra become infused with the force of the new conductor and while they may be playing exactly the same compositions, the audience now responds with enthusiasm rather than with acceptance...”Well, we are only a midsized town...what else could we expect?”

Of course the ideal state of progress would be toward greater independence, but what kind of independence? The type of independence that would no longer require the mental health support services or a kind of independence that can distance the family from a constant state of dysfunction? At what point is it recognized that the ideal cannot be reached? Is it still not a great success when the family is able to progress into the second type of independence that does reduce the intensity and frequency of mental illness even should it require occasional contact with a person such as me to maintain the gains.

Why the termination of a successful modality? Systemic. It is the progress that achieves the behavioral goals that triggers the cessation of services. Is it then so hard to understand why when the goals have been achieved that the family “mysteriously” goes into a tail spin...in what I suspect is the family’s subconscious self-destructive pattern that they hope will require the continuation of the relationship with a professional in my role. So much is subconscious and at times the lower levels of the mind are more in tune with the reality of life than the cognitive mind.

Isn’t the rational mind the hero of our scientific culture? Don’t we praise it so highly. Yet is it not also valid that what is based upon rational thought all too often is just a fabrication or a rationalization that supports the fabric of mental constructs that are not realistically based. They sound logical, but are based upon faulty assumptions.

Ok, again while the system is off course it does it’s best, but it can only be as competent and knowledgeable as the people who make up it’s staff. It’s all so logical, but really nothing more than a house of cards. So, when we can’t cope with this paradox we do what our client’s do...go into denial and we replace reality with an illusion that is fully supported by our created “reality.” How does it manifest. It manifests by forcing us to create our own illusions to support our self-esteem in the face of an unreasonable demand to provide competent mental health services without being provided the proper training and resources to achieve this goal. That’s how we turn our client’s into flakes when they don’t respond to our interventions.

This was kind of what it was like with this family. Very likeable. Very, and yet how can our wonderful effort be so fragile that it isn’t able to hold itself in place while we terminate services. Ahh. There must be a blemish being kept from the light...not all of it could be veiled, but enough to keep the good intentions of all the professionals in line, in line to help the family, to solve the problem.

I became a strong advocate for the family seeking to obtain essential resources that would help them stabilize the home life and then to make progress. I don't know exactly when it began to dawn on me that in a way I was being hustled. Not necessarily with bad intentions, but a hustle nonetheless. Was this just a house of cards that I was building with only the need of a breeze to have it tumble down? Then again, so what if I am being hustled as long as the resources that I was helping the family gain could also be used to help them improve their relationship with each other. I don't mean that S was part of the hustle, but in a way it was, for it was through S that the father was able to continue to stay in the USA.

The fact that I was considering the father's behavior a hustle was in itself a call for me to shake my head to clear the cobwebs and to take a quick look into the mirror to see if I was still me. I looked and I was murky, hazy, wavering...not good. Was it just a sign of exhaustion with the system that does so much good and yet hasn't learned that it's not just about arriving at a goal? Yes, exhaustion but it was also the frustration in not knowing how to get the institution to recognize and to then act upon this acknowledgement that once the goal is reached it needs to be sustained by some degree of continued services if it is to remain in effect over the long-term.

Yes, I knew all along about this. So many insights to the system and how to improve service yet knowing at the same time that better service is not a reasonable expectation. The only element of better service that I have power to implement is my own professional service. In a few of my cases I never had a chance to offer my services in a manner that would have benefited the client and in those cases I was defeated by the inability of the parent to have a positive view of my engagement with the family. In one case I was fired by the client because I inadvertently crossed an emotional barrier when I sought to help him express his feelings about his mother's death from cancer. In other cases I was somewhat successful with the client because they were old enough to be able to understand and then to implement some of the interventions that I presented. In the same light when the kid wasn't able to respond still a great amount of progress was made when I could work with the parent and implement structural changes that altered the kid's behavior. Once in a while I had the cooperation of the client and his parents and then a good amount of progress could be made. However in none of the cases until this one was I able to remain involved after the initial behavioral goals were met and stay engaged to experience and observe the parent work to keep the progress in place.

Being involved and witnessing the apex of progress being past and the gradual decline to a realistic level was disheartening. All along I have been aware that the children's problems are often supported by the parent(s) so that they don't have to look at their own issues. In S's case the opposite was kind of taking place. The father fully supported to the best of his ability the progress of the client through implementing the interventions provided. However as his child improved his own problems became more self-evident and this led to the further development of an underlying depression. Contrary to all of my other cases in which the parent on coming to the edge of their own issues backpedalled to keep them hidden, this father "bravely" stepped into the light and announced his situation.

As previously described, his increased sense of his own problems overwhelmed him and as a result he wasn't able to maintain his use of the interventions that had supported the progress. As a result with his emotional decline so too did S decline in his

ability to maintain his progress in the home. My last push to prevent a complete collapse in the family was to successfully lobby for mental health services to be offered to the father and hopefully some of the progress can be saved. Of course it would be best if I could make an occasional visit with the family and this continued relationship may be the element that says, "Some one really cares," and that's often exactly what is needed to make all of our effort sustainable and keep together in a good way.

I actually have been successful in lobbying for the father being offered the services of a Mandarin speaking therapist. I truly believe that when the father has a chance to be aided in this way he may regain the strength to resurrect a good degree of the previous progress that was attained. Today is my last day with him and then with the client. I just received a call from the father that S had a major episode at the Y after school program. S is letting people know how he feels about how "unfair" the system is to provide him with someone like me and then because of the good work that has been done, his reward is to lose our meaningful relationship. I guess to him, and to me as well this appears as not a reward but as a punishment.

I wonder what this teaches him? Talk about a Catch 22 situation. Only by messing up can he meet someone like me, and should he make progress he loses me. Well, we'll see won't we.

Epilogue

This pathway that I travel is unique. Of all the categories of professional providers my job allows me to spend the most time with one of these kids and as a result I can come to a much deeper understanding of the children and the dynamics within their lives. The understanding is in our relationship. It allows me to grasp the nature of the situation from the depths of personal experience. Because I am directly engaged with the child in their life in their home and with them in the community I am in the enviable position to experience with the child their struggle. I am not limited by the system in having to conjure up the child's experience by just "hearing about it." The extended time of experiencing allows for insights that are not available to the professional who is only allowed to interact through the confines of their professional persona and further limited by the confines of their office.

In engaging in the child's experiences and in the presence of the family and in the community I am able to have an overview that allows me to predict outcomes of the child's effort to journey through life on the path set for them by circumstances and fate.

This attainment of insight and overview is the first stage of my journey to provide help to these children. It then is inherent upon me to share this formulation of the child's challenges with the team of professional providers with whom I am placed and to make the further effort to have this intimate knowledge affect in some positive manner their services to the child.

Along with working with the professionals I am also in the position to share and hopefully shape the interaction between the child and their parents or guardians. And connected to this work is my time with the child and the critical sharing of this knowledge with them so that they can begin to learn the skills of coping with the situation in which they have had little control and yet are being held responsible for their reaction to it.

It is a daunting task, humbling in so many ways and yet it raises my blood to a highly committed level that regardless of the obstacles, regardless of the personality disorders, I will in the end have some positive affect on the situation.

My professional position is as previously stated at the bottom of the totem pole or the hierarchy of professional providers, therefore I have little systemic power. What I do have is my ability to demonstrate effectiveness and sometimes that can assist me to influence those who carry the power to make decisions. Of course that's if I can demonstrate effectiveness without undermining the ego position of the children's therapist and my supervisors who are feeling somewhat undermined by being also yoked to the System. That's as important as my work with the client and their family. Maintaining excellent relationships with all the people who have an influence on my clients is essential to the highest and best outcome of my work.

In my work it is important to have the experience and skill to deal with the ever changing landscape of settings and players. Isn't this what the children have to deal with; an ever changing landscape and characters who inhabit these landscapes. This element is rarely discussed and if discussed, remembered. What is still in its infancy is the awareness and science that most of these children (as well as their parents) have major

deficits processing visual and auditory information. This dysfunction prevents them from accurately “reading the environment.” They actually don’t see or hear what “normal” people do and so their constructs of reality is quite different; way out of the norm. The tragedy is that they are unaware of this as are many of the professionals who work with them. In addition, they also have memory deficits that make it difficult to benefit from past experiences. Most of them also don’t have the basic skills in communication and planning that are essential in achieving a determined outcome or goal.

When I edit these writings I often wonder if I have been too critical of the system and the professionals, for I don’t mean to be critical but rather intend to be instructive through this sharing. I really do admire and respect the integrity and effort of most of the professionals with whom I work. Furthermore, the professional organization within which I work is, when compared to the other agencies, is at the top of provider services. This doesn’t mean that there can’t be further improvement, in fact that is the very quality about the agency within which I work that I most admire. It is that there is the belief and determination that services can always be improved, if not now, then when it is possible. Of course, there is a political environment that inhibits excellence in all social and health services.

The children that come to my attention are all within the mental health spectrum, and yet there are millions of kids and their families that never receive this opportunity for care. As stated above, even with the intent of excellence in our effort to identify all children in need, however there just isn’t the funding to do this work adequately. Unfortunately, those that don’t come into mental health system of care find their way into other systems of care that are far more costly such as is true of the cost of incarceration which is immensely more expensive than early detection and service. Still, as I always say to the kids, it’s critical that you understand what is, not just what should be. You have to become your own personal manager of the way things work and learn how to acquire the necessary resources that provide you with some hope to alter your experience within that reality.

Mental Health Services is still in its childhood; just out of its infancy. The good thing is that there is so much as yet unrealized potential for growth and maturity. The challenge is to find the continuity between generations where young energy can team with the experience of age. We’ll see. Right now the younger generation is kind of split between keeping their heads buried in the sands of internet video games, Facebook, My Space, Twitter, iPods and iPhones and iPads and HD TV and the desire to keep whales alive and well in the oceans. My own now adult children believe that they are not mutually exclusive and that I should loosen up and have more faith in the way things are turning out. OK. Still it’s about the generations not losing their sense of identity and yet having the insight to develop convergent means that allow the strength of both youth and age to merge. Still kind of waiting for this to happen and in the meantime my work is enlightening to me and in the way my brain houses my mind and works with my body to be of service.

I deeply hope that one day the children with whom I work and their families will be able to read this...but I’m kind of afraid that I haven’t done such a great job of this and that the manner in which I write may also lead to feelings of betrayal and a loss of positive regard for me. Hmmm. I’m pretty sure it’s worth the risk. What I would love to happen is for them to add to this account of my experience and for them to write from

their personal viewpoint about the same experiences that I am writing about...or yeah, and about what happened before I fell into their world. That would be interesting and definitely FAR OUT.

Thank you, the reader, for accompanying me and should you feel this journey has merit, please share it with others. If you would like to share your experience in reading this with me I can be reached at Jonathan@outfar10.com. The link to this book is Outfar10.com, Stories and then look for Homeless at Home.

Jonathan