



Cognica

CCA - The Canadian Counselling Association's Newsletter

WINTER

Vol. 41 No. 1 January 2009

President's Message

Happy New Year! May it bless you and your loved ones with health, peace, laughter and the realization of many of your wishes! I trust that you took some time to care for yourself and your loved ones over the holiday period.

Since my Fall message, your Executive and Board of Directors have been very busy with a number of important issues that will affect CCA and you - our loyal and cherished members of CCA. I would like to take this opportunity to bring you up-to-date on these matters.

National Symposium on Inter-Provincial Counsellor Mobility:

In November of 2005 in Vancouver, CCA joined with the BCACC to host the first ever National Symposium on Counsellor Regulation. The statutory regulation of counselling has been a much-discussed topic and a much sought after goal in many Canadian provinces for nearly two decades. Many counsellors believe that both the Canadian public and Canadian counsellors have much to gain from the statutory regulation of the profession.

Three years later, CCA partnered with HRSDC to host the National Symposium on Inter-provincial Mobility within the Counselling Profession. It was a great success by all accounts. I would like to thank our Executive Director, Barbara MacCallum for her excellent and hard work in coordinating this project, and the members of the organizing committee: Dr. Blythe Shepard, Dr. Kris Magnusson, Dr. David Paré, Nassem Siddiqui, and Laurent Matte. Dr. Glenn Sheppard and Dr. Ron Lehr (CCA President Elect) served dual roles, first as members of the organizing committee and second as co-chairs of this very



MARIA DE CICCO

successful event. Ideas were exchanged, and participants had ample opportunity to engage in dialogue, to share and to capitalize on the initiatives on counsellor regulation currently underway in many provinces. I would strongly encourage you to read more about the Symposium in this issue of Cognica.

Immediately following the National Symposium, the last face-to-face meeting of the current CCA Board was held. The Board of Directors engaged in two full action-packed days of meetings. I wish you could see the enthusiasm, the energy and the dedication that these directors bring to their work. I am always amazed at the amount of work that gets accomplished at those meetings in a collegial, collaborative, creative and celebratory fashion.

Our work as a board will come to an end in May of this year. Until then, the members of the Board have committed themselves to completing many projects that were undertaken over the last two years. I am proud of the work that we accomplished and will accomplish together as the Board of 2007-2009. As with all previous boards, our hard work will provide a solid foundation upon which the next board can build. I have been fortunate to work with such a wonderful group of individuals.

Name Change Update:

The Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) has a long and vibrant history of embracing professionals engaged in counselling activities, promoting policies and practices which support the provision of accessible, competent, and accountable counselling services throughout the human lifespan, and accomplishing this task in a manner sensitive

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Changing Landscapes

Pre-Conference - May 19, 2009 / Conference 20-22, 2009
Delta Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Dr. Gabor Mate is the bestselling author of a new book, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. He has also written *When the Body Says No* and *Scattered Minds*. He is presently the staff physician at a clinic in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside where he works with people with drug addictions, HIV and related problems.

Dr. Kris Magnusson is the 2006 recipient of the Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Development and is currently the Associate Vice President, Academic at the University of Lethbridge.

Tom Jackson was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2000 for his music and humanitarian work, and is well known to Canadians as an accomplished musician and actor dedicated to helping the less fortunate.

REGISTRATION:

Register Now! Forms have been included with *Cognica*.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Delta Bessborough Hotel
601 Spadina Crescent East, Saskatoon, SK
Telephone 1-800-268-1133

Mention the CCA/SSCA conference for the discount rate of \$159.00 per room.

EXHIBITORS:

Display space is available. Reserve now to network and connect with over 300 delegates.

Contact Lorraine Engel (lengel@gscs.sk.ca)

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

Cognica's mandate is to "reflect the current status of counselling across Canada".

Cognica is published 4 times per year. The submission deadlines for articles and advertising are: December 1, March 1, June 1, September 1

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All submissions are welcome for consideration. Those accepted will be subject to editorial review prior to publication.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE cont'd

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to the pluralistic nature of society. CCA's mandate includes taking action to understand the needs of the diverse community of counsellors in Canada and it aspires to being inclusive in its membership and to being a strong voice for the promotion of counselling.

During the past four years, there have been major steps taken in Canada to regulate both the profession of counselling and the title of counsellor, psychotherapist, and mental health practitioner. On both coasts and in the central region, legislators and focus groups are continuing this work which impacts directly on the membership of CCA.

We are proposing to formally acknowledge counsellors who use psychotherapy in their work by changing the name of our association to the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. This is an inclusive step in promoting counselling, in providing a welcoming home for a group of professionals who provide counselling services across the lifespan. Furthermore, it acknowledges the large number of our current membership who actively practice psychotherapy. This name change would also immediately assist legislators in understanding the work of Canadian counsellors. In proposing this change, we also want to emphasize that we are neither excluding nor minimizing the role of other forms of counselling practice currently represented by CCA.

As an association, CCA has a responsibility to the counselling profession to be prepared, and to continue to nurture our profession as we progress into the 21st century. At the AGM in May 2008, the idea of changing the name of CCA to the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association was put forward. The motion was tabled and subsequently an extensive communication campaign was launched to ensure that all members fully understand the implications for moving forward.

We set up an email account where members could share their comments either for or against the name change. I would like to begin by thanking everyone who participated and offered their comments on the name change. To date, 155 of the comments received were supportive of the name change and only one was against. Some of you had questions or sought clarification. In response to this, an ad hoc committee was struck and we published our first FAQ document in October of 2008. A second FAQ will be published at the end of January 2009.

In our continuous efforts to communicate with our membership, and in ensuring a working climate of

openness and transparency, the Board has chosen to poll the membership to collect in a more formal way the opinion of our membership. We will be conducting a plebiscite between January and March of 2009.

The results of the plebiscite are non-binding. According to our By-Laws, the matter **can only be decided by voting members at the 2009 AGM (May 19, 2009)**. However, the results of the plebiscite will be shared at the AGM so that those present will hear the wishes of the membership. For these reasons, it is important that you participate in the poll and let your voice be heard!

Board elections:

By the time this goes to press, nominations will have been received for our next President-Elect and Board members who will serve with President Ron Lehr. In addition to voting on the Name Change, members in many provinces and territories may be voting for their new director. The results of these elections and/or acclamations will be announced at the conference in Saskatchewan when the new members of the board come together under the leadership of Dr. Lehr.

Conference 2009:

Please mark your calendars for the annual CCA conference which will be held in Saskatoon. Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to reconnect with your friends, network with colleagues from across Canada and pursue professional development activities. Don't miss out on any of the social activities and celebrations! Our friends and colleagues of the Saskatchewan organizing committee for Conference 2009 have been working tirelessly to bring you a one of a kind conference –Prairie style! After all, according to renown Canadian author, David Bouchard, "*IF YOU'RE NOT FROM THE PRAIRIE*"...

I look forward to meeting many of you in beautiful Saskatchewan for its “*Changing Landscapes*” and discovering the wonders that Mr. Bouchard eloquently and passionately describes in his book.”

In closing and in keeping with tradition, here is my quote for this edition of *Cognica*.

“A desire presupposes the possibility of action to achieve it; action presupposes a goal which is worth achieving.” Ayan Ranjan

What do you desire to achieve?



**Maria De Cicco
President**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

Safe and Joyous Holidays Everyone!

My opening sentence has to be CONGRATULATIONS Nova Scotia and members of the Nova Scotia Association of Counselling Therapists (NSACT)! For those of you who don't know, at precisely 3:27 pm, Monday, November 24, 2008 the Nova Scotia House of Assembly passed *The Counselling Therapists Act* with the support of all three political parties. This is historic in Nova Scotia and it continues the trend that is happening across Canada. Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia now have legislation in place to regulate the profession of counselling. 'Tis the season, they say! Although in this case, despite all of us praying for a miracle to make this happen, it really came down to the leadership and hard work of Marian MacDonald, Chair of NSACT and the tremendous action taken by more than 30 of the NSACT members lobbying and visiting their MLA's. This was not a one-time effort but has been on going for the past ten years! Many people have laid the groundwork for this to come to fruition. We gratefully acknowledge those people who have worked on legislation in Nova Scotia since the early 1990's –thanks to all of you. What a perfect example of how we, as a *profession united* can make things happen!

It has been a heavy work term but a lot has been accomplished this fall. I recently spent seven days in Ottawa where I co-chaired and participated in a national symposium on inter-jurisdictional mobility for counsellors. The mobility branch of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) within Human Resource and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) funded this initiative. At this symposium, CCA and provincial representatives (of associations and provincial governments) from across Canada continued discussions, which began Vancouver in 2005, to identify issues and concerns related to the mobility of counsellors [used instead of other titles we now use] across Canada, and to coordinate the standards of practice of counsellors who are registered under legislation in one jurisdiction, so that they will not have to meet any new requirements for registration in another jurisdiction. *No new requirements!* By April 1, 2009 this will take effect for all the regulated professions across Canada. Consider this example: If you live and become registered as a counsellor in Ontario, Nova Scotia, or Quebec, you can move to one of the other provinces where regulation exists, and be registered without any further upgrading such as taking more courses, writing qualifying exams, etc. In other words, Provincial Colleges in other jurisdictions will have to register you to practice in their province. As legislation occurs in other provinces, this widens your possibilities. Both the credential you have to

call yourself a Counsellor/Counselling Therapist/Mental Health Therapist, and any competency requirements you had to meet in your jurisdiction will not be questioned. It also allows you to apply across the country and be competitive on advertised positions.



RON LEHR

Over the next few years, as more jurisdictions become regulated, a regulated profession will contribute significantly to our professional identity as Counsellors/Counselling Therapists/Mental Health Therapists and to our identity as a counselling profession. We will need to have a professional response to this new environment. We will have to embrace changes that a regulatory environment and mobility will bring to us as counsellors as well as to CCA, our national association. In October, our Past President, David Paterson visited our colleagues in England (The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) with more than 30,000 members). Their

government will regulate all of them in 2010. They are scared (like many of us), but energized! David shared with us a metaphor the Chair of BACP used to describe the inevitability of regulation, and the impact this change would have on members and their national association. She said (and I paraphrase), *regulation is like a big rock in a stream; as an association, we are flowing towards it; we will flow around it; we will embrace it; and we will move on*. We will become other than who we are. These are exciting times!

The season is upon us to stop or go slower! I can never have too much relaxation time yet I never get enough. We work hard and many of us juggle family, personal and professional commitments and work. Many of us have to book time in our day planner "to be spontaneous" so we can "have fun" and "relax". Apparently, the majority of Canadians require three months to catch up on sleep deprivation. I hear that research on sleep suggests that most Canadians are deprived of 17 hours of sleep - no wonder I feel tired sometimes! You can eliminate the sleep loss if – and I do emphasize the *IF* – you go to bed, allow yourself to sleep as long as you want, and wake up whenever you wake up. When you begin this process you might sleep ten to twelve hours a night (still less than what an adolescent can sleep!) for a period of three months. This, I hear, will regulate your sleep, which apparently will even out to seven to eight hours of sleep a night – and, you will feel rested. Small wonder a one or two week holiday will not revitalize many of us! It sure sheds light on why

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PRESIDENT-ELECT MESSAGE cont'd

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people who retire look so good after a few months off! So, during the holiday, I will join you in a revitalization project. We will get some rest but we will also keep our priorities front and centre—our “big rocks”. Mine are being with family and friends. Whatever faith you follow, may all of you reap the benefits this season has to offer. Be safe and take time...

Ron Lehr, President Elect

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NEWS FROM NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia has exciting and important news!! At precisely 3:27 pm, Monday, November 24, 2008 Bill 201, *The Counselling Therapists Act*, passed Final Reading in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, supported by all three political parties.

The Counselling Therapists Act provides title protection, not practice protection, and will protect the titles *Registered Counselling Therapist*, *Counselling Therapist*, *Registered Counselling Therapist Candidate* and any derivations or abbreviations of those titles.

The passage of this Bill was the culmination of years of work by numerous people, with a very intense focus over the past year. The idea of legislation for counsellors was first talked about in the early nineties, with the forming of the Nova Scotia Association of Professional Counsellors in 1995. The by-laws were developed with legislation in mind. The first organized effort began in 2001 with a submission to the Department of Health, requesting consideration for legislation. In 2006 the NSAPC made the decision to move from the designation “Professional Counsellor” to “Counselling Therapist” in keeping with British Columbia and changed its name to the Nova Scotia Association of Counselling Therapists (NSACT).

Space does not permit me to detail the whole process involved over these many years. I will say that the political process is a unique and slow moving process. It takes a lot of patience, persistence and good organization to be successful. I am proud to say that we, the members of NSACT, did all the work, except for the drafting of the Act and addressing the actual legal matters. This was not a one-person job. The Legislation Committee was a small committee, but approximately 30 NSACT members across the province volunteered their time to meet with MLA's. Without this combined effort, we would not have succeeded.

The coming year will be a transition year, where regulations will be drafted and approved by government, and the Act proclaimed. When that task is completed, the *Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists* will be established. We are excited and looking forward to the challenges of change.

Marian McDonald, M. Ed., CCC, RCT
Chair

*Nova Scotia Association
of Counselling Therapists*

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE INTER-PROVINCIAL MOBILITY OF THE COUNSELLING PROFESSION

The counselling profession is in a unique position to address the issues and challenges associated with the statutory regulation of its members across the country. Counsellors¹ are currently regulated in only three jurisdictions in Canada, Quebec, Ontario and most recently Nova Scotia. However, for a variety of reasons there are developments that are moving the profession towards statutory regulation in many other provinces.

Since the regulation of professions is a provincial responsibility there is likely to be diversity with respect to various components of regulatory legislation as it develops. Without a national dialogue and inter-provincial consultations we can anticipate some significant differences with respect to such core features as professional title, scope of practice, controlled or restricted acts, entry requirements, code of ethics, and professional standards of practice.

The Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) supports the establishment of statutory regulation for the counselling profession. It is also interested in an orderly development of regulatory regimes across the country consistent with established professional attributes and practices and in a manner to secure occupational mobility for its members.

Therefore, in June 2008, CCA submitted a proposal to Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) to obtain funding support to host a National Symposium on Inter-Provincial Mobility within the Counselling Profession.

CCA believed that this National Symposium was very timely. It is particularly so in light of the recent announcements by the provincial premiers and territorial leaders following the meetings of the Council of the Federation held in Quebec City, July, 2008. At this meeting it was announced that significant amendments are planned for Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade. These changes, expected for 2009, are intended to further secure occupational mobility .

The National Symposium occurred on November 12 and 13, 2008 in Ottawa.

The key objectives of the Symposium Project were:

- to follow-up and continue the dialogue that began in November 2005 in Vancouver when the first symposium was held.
- to surface and discuss issues generated by the new environment of inter-jurisdictional labour mobility;
- to develop an action plan related to inter-jurisdictional mobility for the counselling profession; and

- to identify a core group of stakeholders to take accountability for the action plan.

The symposium participants consisted of:

- Two (2) participants from each of:
 - ▶ The Task Group for Counsellor Regulation in British Columbia (7 associations represented)
 - ▶ The Ontario Coalition of Mental Health Professionals (17 associations represented)
 - ▶ the Nova Scotia Association of Counselling Therapists
 - ▶ The New Brunswick Professional Counselling Association
 - ▶ The Prince Edward Island Counselling Association
 - ▶ l'Ordre des conseillers d'orientation du Québec
- The CCA Board of Directors.
- AIT representatives
- HRSDC representatives
- a representative from the provincial government of Saskatchewan
- Dr. Rick Morris, from the Ontario College of Psychologists

As a preliminary exercise, participants were provided the opportunity to orally respond to the following focusing question: "As we think about the changes to the Agreement on Internal Trade announced by the Premiers in July 2008, and the potential effects of these changes on inter-jurisdictional mobility and regulation of the counselling profession in Canada, what are some of the issues, challenges, questions and opportunities that come to mind?" Subsequent to verbally identifying any such issue, challenge, question or opportunity, the participant then provided a very brief written summary of his/her point.

Thirty-six issues, challenges, questions and opportunities were identified during this initial exercise and equally distributed amongst three time periods. During each subsequent time slot, participants self-selected into groups, to discuss one of the topics of interest to them. Each of these conversation groups submitted additional information (related to achievements and overcoming barriers as well as key messages) in the areas chosen for discussion.

Participants also took part in an interview exercise where they developed success indicators and responded to the following interview questions:

1. As we contemplate inter-jurisdictional mobility, what are some practical assumptions we can make about the regulatory environments in which we currently

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NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM cont'd

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- operate? Please complete the sentence "We can safely assume that..."
2. What are some major cultural shifts that will need to happen for the counselling profession to fully maximize opportunities provided by inter-jurisdictional mobility? What do we need to do more of? Less of?
 3. What are the areas in which we, the counselling profession, must excel if we are to fully embrace inter-jurisdictional mobility? Please complete the sentence "We had better be really great at..."
 4. What are some actions/activities that should now be contemplated to encourage buy-in and support for inter-jurisdictional mobility across the Canadian counselling community?

As a final exercise, participants were provided the opportunity to reflect on the symposium.

What was the significance of this two-day event for you?

Following are some of the comments that were made:

"We shifted into action."

"It is tremendous to have the support from such an august body of people who have either been through the experience or looking at the experience and actually feel as if we are in your thoughts in a way that is supportive and helpful. It is also incredibly wonderful to see such political savvy and thoughtfulness in concert with such deep sharing. I have been really moved by moments these past two days."

"I was surprised by how much fun I had. I expected just a lot of boring work and I was laughing a lot. I was particularly pleased with meeting people whose faces now will stay with me with the names that I have seen and it is so nice to have a cross Canada feeling here."



"I was anticipating that there would be a tension around competing interests, as it were, and this effort to get everyone on one page. In the end, it actually started almost the first morning with the presentation it seemed like no, no we can have multiple perspectives and still go forward together. That was quite encouraging. It took the pressure off."

"One of the most gratifying things was that we actually managed to get from coast to coast to coast in one room and that we were enriched by our differences and it deepened the conversation; rather than building a chasm it actually built bridges. I think we are in a far better place to go forward with actions that are inclusive and embracing of those differences because we got everyone here; so, kudos to those people who got all of us here in one place at one time."

"I was excited by the richness of the experience of the people I met for two days and I was also very much impressed by the warmth I felt towards me, as a newcomer, and I was really touched by that. Thank you."

"What I am excited about is some hopefulness. I feel like there is some momentum to move something forward here. That feels exciting to me because I didn't have that, I didn't think that was possible to have before coming here. That was made largely by the ways that everybody in this room worked, the facilitation that we were provided, so thank you."

"I am really excited about the wealth of expertise that is in the room and how solution focused people are and it is not about the barriers and roadblocks that we have. It is identifying that this may be an issue and someone else may have a solution already to it, or a different lens to look through for that issue. I find that very exciting. I think it is very exciting the direction we are heading in and the wealth of expertise that is here and that is behind us and couldn't be in the room today."

One of the key outcomes of the Symposium was to identify a core group of stakeholders (6-10) who will act as stewards of the profession to develop an action plan related to the inter-provincial mobility impediments identified. This group met for the first time in December 2008 and will carry this important work forward.

The final report from the Symposium will be posted on the CCA website for members to review. Stay tuned as this important work moves forward.

(Footnotes)

¹ At this time, a range of terms are being used in the various jurisdictions across Canada to describe practitioners of counselling/psychotherapy. For simplicity sake, in this article, we will use the term "counselling" and "counsellors"

What does the concept of social justice mean for counsellors?

Submitted by Counsellors for Social Justice Chapter

Social Justice is both a philosophy and a commitment to action that has an established history in critical social-political dialogues generally and, more specifically, in counselling and psychology (Fouad, Gerstein, Toporek, 2006). It seems hard to imagine any professional counsellor intentionally promoting social injustice; however, our role in actively promoting social justice is less well established.

In light of this reality, a new chapter of the Canadian Counselling Association was formed in 2007, and we have called ourselves Counsellors for Social Justice (CSJ). The mission of the CSJ Chapter is to “... advocate for social justice and social change through the role of the professional counsellor. The Chapter promotes equity and human rights for individuals and societies through action, education, training, consciousness-raising, advocacy, and conscientious objection. The Chapter is dedicated to working across borders, boundaries, professional disciplines, and differences in the pursuit of peace and wellness for all” (CSJ Constitution). The purpose of this article is to explore what we really mean in practice when we talk about social justice, and what the implications are for each of us as counsellors, counsellor educators, or administrators.

The following key principles are often attributed to social justice: (1) fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities; (2) direct action to ameliorate discrimination, oppression and marginalization within society; and (3) full inclusion and participation of all members of society in a way that enables them to reach their potential and experience human rights (Arthur, Collins, McMahon, & Marshall, 2007; Fouad et al., 2006). At first glance these core concepts are likely both familiar and unsurprising. Most counsellors would agree that each of these things is important, and that the values we hold as a counselling association reflect a social justice perspective. In fact, we would likely label as unethical any counsellor who suggested that certain individuals or groups should have less access to education, health care, or other social services, or should be subject to oppression and discrimination by other individuals or groups, or should be denied an opportunity to direct their futures in a way that enables them to achieve both self-actualization and meaningful integration within society.

Notwithstanding these facts, social injustices remain pervasive, subtle, and embedded in our everyday worlds in a way that often leaves us unaware or unable to easily deny the impact that they have on our clients and on ourselves. Common examples of social injustices experienced in

Canada include: increasing poverty levels of women raising children on their own, lack of basic water and electricity on First Nations reserves, lack of affordable housing, wasted education and experience of immigrants and refugees who are unable to re-qualify to practice their professions, and so on. Although we may be somewhat apathetic about these issues until they touch us directly or until a major event brings them into the forefront for us, we have no difficulty identifying them as unfair or unjust.

What is sometimes less obvious to us is the sideways glance, the quiet re-shuffling of resumes, the joke that demeans, the absence of cultural images in media or office waiting rooms, and other less dramatic examples of social injustices, that drain the energy and obscure the hope of our clients as they strive for greater health and wellbeing. Although we have developed our skills as compassionate and empathic listeners, we become complicit in fostering the isolation of otherness if these stories are left untold and unnoticed.

As a chapter, we are suggesting that social justice issues are always present in our everyday dialogues with clients, but action to change social injustice will not be possible until these issues also become part of the conceptual lens that we bring to assessment and intervention. Counselling and psychology have traditionally focused on the individual and individually-focused interventions such as coping strategies, adjustments in thinking and feeling to facilitate better coping or higher self-esteem, or changes in interpersonal dynamics to enable more meaningful and satisfying relationships. There are exceptions to this model, of course, in the work of early career development theorists (Hargrove, Creagh, & Kelly, 2003) and in the feminist and multicultural movements (Reynolds & Constantine, 2004; Whalen et al., 2004), for instance. However, for the most part, the profession of counselling is more often associated with individual experiencing rather than systemic and structural injustices. It is simply more practical and more comfortable to focus on the person sitting in front of us, without fully engaging with the context in which that person lives his or her life on a daily basis.

The problem with this separation between the client in our office, and the client out there in the world is that the *not asking* simply reinforces that social injustices are either here to stay, and that the best our clients can hope for is to learn to work within this unjust system, or that they are not significant factors in understanding our clients' experiences and finding ways to work with them to achieve the

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CHAPTER CORNER cont'd

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outcomes they want and the deserve. Either way, we miss an important opportunity to validate our clients' perceptions, to increase their awareness of the external factors that are central to their problems, and to support and empower them to challenge the oppressive forces that are limiting their ability to reach their full potential (Bowman et al., 2001).

If we do begin to ask these questions of ourselves and of our clients, however, we are soon faced with a further dilemma: It simply isn't possible to maintain the status quo in terms of what we *do* as counsellors. If we decide that the target of change should actually be something outside of our client – unjust policies and practices of organizations, social norms that exclude full participation based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and so on, or socio-economic conditions that disproportionately affect certain groups - then what do we actually say or do? Unfortunately, our education and professional development often haven't prepared most of us to step outside our office and actually effect change in these broader contexts or systems (Arthur & Collins, 2005; Toporek & Williams, 2006). Our funding agencies, our supervisors, and maybe even our clients expect us to stay put and focus on the *real work* of counselling—anything else maybe seen as personally biased.

In fact, many counsellors may believe that we would be putting our careers at risk by taking on these larger issues (Arthur, Collins, & Marshall, in press). However, it is these larger issues that continue to bring clients into our offices day after day, and put artificial and unjust boundaries around what they can achieve for themselves and their families. We can't claim that *doing nothing* is the same as *doing no harm*. This is our society, our world, our people – we are all part of the system that continues to perpetuate social, economic, and political injustices (Parra-Cardona, Holtrop, & Cordova, 2005). We could, in fact, be perceived as benefiting from the doing nothing, as clients continue to access our services to learn to deal with the internalized stigmatization, to cope with the effects of discrimination and marginalization, and to alter their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours so that they can function more effectively in an unjust world.

It is the desire to move from words to action that has inspired the formation of the Counsellors for Social Justice Chapter. We are asking ourselves and each other what our roles should be in promoting social justice, what the implications are for professional practice, for counsellor education, and for our association, and what we do with the awareness that our own privilege contributes to social injustice. Our goal in this brief article is to invite you to engage with us in this important dialogue. We are confident

that together we can build the momentum needed to make a difference.

We encourage you to join the CSJ chapter, to watch for announcements about opportunities to be involved in social justice activities, to start to think about the broader factors that impact client well-being, and to explore ways to promote change within your current spheres of influence. If you are interested in further information and resources about social justice, please see our chapter Web site at <http://sj-cca.wikidot.com/>.

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Innovative Counselling Techniques for Children, Youth and Families

By Liana Lowenstein

When children are referred for counselling, they typically feel anxious and are reluctant to talk directly about their thoughts and feelings. But activities that are creative and engaging can help children to safely express themselves. The purpose of this article is to provide counsellors with creative interventions to engage, to assess and to treat children, youth and families.

Interventions

Pin the tail on the Donkey (Adapted from Lowenstein, 1999) Purchase a Pin the Tail on the Donkey Game (available at toy or party stores) and cover any reference to "Happy Birthday" on the game. Tape the game to a smooth wall at a height that all the children in the group can reach. Write questions on index cards, such as: (1) What's the best thing that ever happened to you? (2) If you could make three wishes, what would they be? (3) What's something that makes you happy? Describe the game as follows: "One person is chosen to go first. This player is given a cardboard tail with a piece of tape attached to it (the game should come with these tails.) The player closes his or her eyes, and the leader spins the player around twice, and faces the player toward the Donkey Game. The player walks up to the game and sticks the tail onto the picture. The tail must be taped to the first place it touches. If a player misses the tail on the picture, then that player must pick a question card from the stack of index cards and answer the question (the leader can read the question aloud to the group). Once that player answers the question, the other group members have a turn to answer the same question. If the player gets the tail on the donkey, then instead of drawing a question card, that player gets to hand out treats from the treat bag to all the players. The next player then has a turn, and so on, until all the group members have had a turn. The game continues until all of the questions have been answered." During the activity, there is ample opportunity to gather assessment information, observe group dynamics, and enhance peer interaction skills.

Butterflies in My Stomach (Lowenstein, 1999) Introduce the activity by pointing out that everyone has problems and worries. Then explain the expression "I have butterflies in my stomach" by stating, "When you are worried or nervous about something, your stomach might feel funny or jittery,



as if you have butterflies in your stomach. You don't really have butterflies in your stomach; it just feels like you do." Next, the child lies down on a large sheet of banner paper, while the counsellor outlines the child's body. (Alternatively, the child can draw a body outline.) Then the counsellor gives the child assorted sizes of paper butterflies (see Lowenstein, 1999, p. 11). The child writes his or her worries on the paper butterflies. Bigger worries are written on the larger butterflies, smaller worries on the smaller ones. The butterflies are then glued onto the child's body outline, inside the stomach. As the child identifies each worry, the counsellor can facilitate further discussion by asking open-ended questions, such as, "Tell me more about this worry." This activity is a useful assessment tool, particularly with children who have a multitude of presenting problems, as it enables them to communicate to the counsellor which problems are most pressing and need priority in treatment.

The Way I Want It to Be (Adapted from Lowenstein 2002) The client draws two pictures, the first on a sheet of paper titled "The Way My Life Is" and the second on a sheet of paper titled "The Way I Want It to Be." The client then discusses the two pictures. The counsellor can ask the following process questions:

- (1) What are three important things you want to tell me about each picture?
- (2) How are you going to get from the way it is to the way you want it to be?
- (3) What do you need to do differently to get to the way you want it to be?
- (4) How might counselling help you get to where you want to be?
- (5) How will you feel when you get to where you want to be?

A variation for family therapy is to have the family draw two pictures. The first is titled "The Way It Is in Our Family." The second is titled "The Way We Want It to Be in Our Family." The counsellor processes the activity as described above, but the questions are reworded to suit a family session for example:

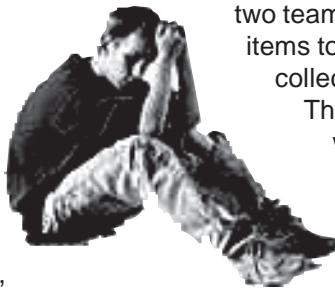
■ **Continued on page 12**

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- (1) What does each member of the family need to do differently to help your family get to the way you want it to be?
- (2) How might counselling help your family get to where you want to be?

Incorporating art activities into family sessions provides a medium to engage all family members. While the content of the family drawings provides valuable diagnostic information, the counsellor should also focus on the family dynamics that emerge during the exercise, including interaction styles, issues of power and control, roles and dysfunctional patterns.

It's My Life CD (Adapted from Smith, 2008) Begin by exploring the client's musical taste and favorite musicians, bands, and CDs. Present the client with the empty jewel case and explain that she/he will be designing her/his own CD. This will include the CD title, a cover design, and a playlist. The CD theme can be as vague as "This CD will be about your life," or more specific, such as focusing on a specific treatment issue (i.e., anger, grief, and so on). Clients can create fictitious song titles for their playlist or select real songs that have meaning for them, or a combination of the two. Many adolescents are immersed in the world of music. This connection to music is a great way to begin to establish a relationship with teen clients in a non-threatening manner. The information gathered from this project can be used as a springboard for further discussions and activities.



The Dice Game (Adapted from Lowenstein, 2006) Explain the Dice Game as follows: "This is a game to help you talk about your thoughts and feelings. To play, roll the die. If you roll an even number (2, 4, 6), pick a card and answer the question. If you roll an odd number (1, 3, 5), you get a bead (or Lego). At the end of the game, create something using the beads/Lego's." Develop questions geared to the client. For example, questions for a bereaved child might include:

- (1) How did you and each person in your family react to your loved one's death?
- (2) Tell about a worry you have had since your loved one died?
- (3) Share a favorite memory of the person who died.

Because children enjoy playing games, this activity is engaging and facilitates communication about salient issues.

Scavenger Hunt (Adapted from Lowenstein 2006) This intervention is most appropriate for group settings, but it can be adapted for individual or family sessions as well. The counsellor develops a list of scavenger hunt items for group members to collect. Modify the list depending on the ages of the clients and the issues to be addressed in the session. For example, scavenger hunt items for a group of children dealing with divorce might include:

- (1) Definition of divorce
- (2) Outline of a hand
- (3) Five feelings children might have when parents divorce
- (4) Two people with the same shoe size
- (5) Words of advice to help children who feel the divorce was their fault
- (6) A group of children holding hands and singing a song.

The activity is explained as follows: "You will be divided into two teams. Each team will get a list of scavenger hunt items to collect or create. You will have 15 minutes to collect or create as many items on the list as you can.

The team that collects the most items from the list wins." A group leader should be assigned to each group to assist with reading and writing and to facilitate appropriate group interaction. This intervention promotes open communication and problem solving and strengthens group cohesion.

Anger Brainstormers (Adapted from Lowenstein 2002) This intervention is most appropriate for group sessions. Divide the group into two teams. Explain the activity as follows: "We are going to play a brainstorming game that's going to help us talk about anger. The object of the game is for each team to come up with as many items as they can for each category. For example, if the category is 'things that make people laugh' then each team must make a list of things that make people laugh, and the team with the longest list wins that round. Each round lasts three minutes. At the end of each round, each team reads aloud the items on their list. Each item counts for one point. The points are accumulated and the team with the most points at the end of the game wins." Brainstormer categories include:

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- (1) Things that make kids your age angry
- (2) Things that happen to your body when you feel angry
- (3) Safe ways to express anger.

Following the brainstorming activity, the therapist can facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- (1) What did you learn about anger?
- (2) Why is it important to learn safe ways to express anger?
- (3) Which anger management strategies work best for you?

Conclusion

Children will more readily embrace counselling if it is engaging, innovative and immersed in play. The activities in

this article are designed to appeal to children so that a positive counselling experience results. Using these and other creative activities, counsellors can break through the resistive barrier, engage children in counselling and have successful treatment outcomes.

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