

LONG ISLAND INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

HUH?!?

a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups

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Sixth Year of Publication

Fall 2001

From the Editor

Recently I was invited to give a keynote address at the prestigious Children's Aid Society of New York City. The occasion was their annual Social Worker Recognition Day. The day was devoted to social group work. It started with a full buffet breakfast, accompanied by two staff-musician-singers leading a group of about 200 in protest songs from the 1960's. This was introduced as a reminder of group work's social justice roots. It also did a good job of emphasizing group work's use of activity. After my presentation and a series of workshops, the day ended with CEO Phil Coltoff talking about his group work roots as a boy growing up in the Bronx, and how it helped to shape his development as a person and professional.

My keynote address was entitled, "Why Group Work Works." After polling the audience and making a few general introductory comments I said that I would begin by orienting the participants to the group work that I practice and promote: social group work. Following is the text of my opening remarks.

The group work I know..

- It is the group work with roots over 100 years.
- It is the group work that was a movement before a method.
- It is the group work that Jane Adams, the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, helped to shape.
- It is the group work that the father of group psychotherapy, Samuel Slavson, practiced, taught, and wrote about.
- It is the group work where participants are group members not clients or patients.
- It is the group work where the group worker does with the group, not for or to the group.
- It is the group work where learning by doing is as valuable as insight through discussion.
- It is the group work that is not ashamed of fun and laughter.
- It is the group work that makes use of everyday life, not just programmed activities.
- It is the group work where authority and responsibility are shared with members.
- It is the group work with ragged edges that belie its genius.
- It is the group work that can be messy and noisy and chaotic and profound,

all at once.

- It is the group work that threatens grown ups who are uptight.
- It is the group work that invites the rational and spontaneous.
- It is the group work that lets taboo subjects see the light of day.
- It is the group work that begins with need, not diagnosis.
- It is the group work that respects pathology, and doesn't worship it.
- It is the group work that embraces strengths, not deficits.
- It is the group work graduate schools once held close, and then abandoned.

- It is the group work that is a rare gem in the human services, yet faces extinction.
- It is the group work that needs practitioners to stay the course, administrators to support the way, and missionaries to spread the word.

What do you think? Does any of this characterize your orientation? What would you add to the list? We'd love to hear from you. All you need to write is one line. Send your one-liners and we'll print them in a future issue.



An Open Letter ...

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present our second professional conference:

***Group Work: The Hidden Treasure
in Youth Development***

MARCH 8, 2002 - Full Day

Youth development and social group work are natural and inseparable partners. They are both strength-based and concerned with promoting young people's competencies. This conference will highlight the natural relationship between group work and youth development and teach skills for promoting youth development through group work.

So please **SAVE THE DATE!** More details will follow in future issues of **HUH?!?**

The Steering Committee

***Long Island Institute for
Group Work with Children & Youth***



Looking Back ... A Reminiscence The Paradox of Power Sharing in Group Work By: Alison Johnson

This is the 18th
feature in a
continuing series.

"I just love to watch you make it happen," a co-worker remarked to me the other day. She reminded me of how powerful I can be as a group worker. I didn't always feel this way.

As a beginning worker 23 years ago, I felt powerless, scared, and bumbling. I believed that my inadequacies would be exposed at any moment by unruly or uncooperative group members. I was *as* worried that I would lose face with my staff team as I was about helping the teenagers in my groups.

When I began my first job as a mental health associate on the admissions unit at Children's Treatment Services in Louisville, Kentucky in 1977, my training was nil. My only group experience had been living in a small house with five brothers and sisters, and working as a volunteer for an inner city community center summer camp arts and crafts program for two weeks, without supervision. My bachelor's degree in psychology and minor in anthropology prepared me, in theory, for working with people.

I needed a job. So I took the first paraprofessional position offered to me. I was considered highly skilled since I had a college degree and most of my co-workers only went as far as high school. As a result of my "formidable"

background I was immediately expected to lead a daily living group with 13 residents, boys and girls ages 6 through 18. Some of the residents were more openly involuntary than others. I didn't know it at the time, but my first job would turn out to be excellent preparation for the clinician and group worker I was to become.

Children's Treatment Service was the only public, children's psychiatric hospital in Kentucky. 1977 was a special time in the hospital when social workers were prominent members of the staff, functioning as team leaders and coordinating a multidisciplinary staff of physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, art therapists, recreational staff, residents, and a primary care advocate whose job it was to fight for the interest and needs of residents.

Our institution's structure modeled power-sharing and mutuality. I had access to all of the professionals. Knowing that I was in over my head in terms of leading groups, I asked to assist several social workers in their groups. Soon I was co-leading a sexuality group for girls, a recreational group for boys, a co-ed social skills group for residents of the admissions unit, and the daily living group.

After two years of

group work experience I decided to apply for graduate school at the Raymond Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville. I was accepted and it was there that I met Ruth Middleman and Group Work.

It was in Ruth's classes that I learned that there was a lot more to good group work than having good intentions and attempting to control the action. There were skills such as planning, purposeful use of activities, and evaluation, among others. I learned that there was a special mind set needed for working with groups.

As a beginner I felt so scared. I often watched the clock, praying for the hour to end. I tried to keep members busy all of the time. I misused Ruth's idea that in the skillful use of activities the means justify the ends. I misappropriated activities to kill time and mask my feelings of inadequacy. The group members rarely, if at all, reflected and worked through anything that was going on in the life of the group.

As I recall, members followed my lead and waited for me to share power with them. But that's not what I did. When I look back, my initial design was to offer the illusion of group work in order to avoid criticism and maintain control.

Consequently, I bypassed mutuality and delayed sharing power with the group members.

Looking back I see how much of the richness of the group remained dormant. I was afraid to let go and let things happen, allow the natural noise and chaos of the group a little space to breathe so that trust and real work could more easily emerge. I realize now what I failed to then, you have to share power to reach mutuality.

At this point in my life I am better at letting the group breathe. I have greater trust in myself and group members. I understand the power of mutuality and have greater skill in subtly bringing feelings and thoughts forward, and helping members to make new meanings from their experiences. I understand that supporting a sense of power among group members doesn't lessen mine. The paradox is that sharing power doesn't diminish mine, rather it enable others to see options and choices in their lives, increasing the power of everyone in the group.

Alison Johnson is in private practice in Louisville, Kentucky. She is the chairperson of the Kentucky chapter of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

Catch the PEP-C Wave by *Kristen Johnson*

PEP-C, Peer Education Program Coalition, is a fairly new coalition of community-based peer education program supervisors in Nassau County. Each program, consisting of youth who are mostly high school students, has their own focus from HIV prevention, gay/lesbian issues, sexuality, to abstinence. PEP-C is a time where peer supervisors share resources, provide technical assistance to each other, and serve as a support network for work

that has some unique challenges and great rewards. So, if a program needs some new training ideas or the supervisor is having difficulty managing all their peer educators, the coalition tries to provide suggestions as well as a space to vent frustrations or enthusiasm. Our intent is to help all the programs to grow and provide the best services possible. We currently have 10 peer education programs in our coalition, and we have all found this coalition to be extremely helpful.

Recently, PEP-C has begun scheduling events like hosting a teen theater performance where all the Nassau County peer educators involved in this coalition come together. It is still a developing coalition but it has already been a great support for me within my own peer education program.

When I first started attending PEP-C meetings, I was fairly new to the peer supervisor position and still trying to learn the ropes. I went to a meeting and was able to share my concerns about how to structure a comprehensive training. Several members from the group gave me suggestions on how they have learned to conduct a good training program. Some of the suggestions offered were having a question box, giving a take home quiz, having a discussion on the topic after teaching it, and

putting together a fact sheet for each lesson. Some one else encouraged me to have the teens evaluate the training process after it is completed to see what worked and what should be changed next time. I took all these ideas back to work and became excited about planning my trainings. PEP-C allows some creative group processing to happen. It provides me with new ideas and a support system to bounce ideas off. It had been an integral part of my development at my new position.

➤ For more information about the Peer Education Program Coalition (PEP-C), contact Kristen Johnson of Planned Parenthood of Nassau County at (516) 750-2653



Mission Statement Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth

The Mission of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth is: To promote and enhance effective group work practice with children and youth through advocacy, education, and collegial support. **HUH?!?** is the Institute's quarterly newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration and support for anyone working with young people in group settings.

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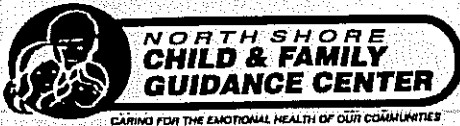
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Attn: Jane E. Yazdpour

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RESOURCES

+ *Professional Training Workshops: November 14, 2001: Play and Its Meaning for Children; November 28, 2001: Helping Children Learn, Tools for Special Needs Children; December 5, 2001: Asperger's and High Functioning Autism - Understanding the Diagnosis, Helping the Children; December 12, 2001: Risk and Protective Factors for Children - Helping Them Grow.* All workshops will be held at 9 AM at The Marks Family Right from the Start 0-3+ Center; 80 North Service Road-LIE; Manhasset, NY 11030-4019. The cost is \$25 per workshop. Send name, address, phone number, and payment to: North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Rd.; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215; Attn: Barney Navas.

+ *Beginning October 17, 2001 - Certificate Program: The Treatment of Young Children.* This certificate program for professionals focuses on practice with children under ten. Held on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8:30 PM, the course will run until May 15, 2002. The cost is \$1,250 (payment plans are available). Please contact Sandra Wolkoff, CSW at The Marks Family Right from the Start 0-3+ Center for more information - Call: (516) 484-3174 or Fax: (516) 484-2729.

HUH??? is the quarterly newsletter of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth, a program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215; Phone: (516) 626-1971 • Fax: 626-8043. *Executive Director/CEO:* Marion S. Lavine, ACSW; *Associate Director/NSC&FGC and Newsletter Editor:* Andrew Melekoff, ACSW, CASAC. *Newsletter Design and Layout:* Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour, BS. *Participating Agencies:* Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect, Garden City; Youth Directions and Alternatives, E.Northport; Herricks School District, Albertson; Sanctuary Project, Huntington; Plainedge School District; L.I. Chapter/Assoc. for Advancement of Social Work With Groups; L.I.Crisis Center, Bellmore; Temple Sinai of Roslyn; Huntington Youth Bureau, Huntington. © Copyright September 1, 2001/USA.

TIPS: For Dealing with Conflict

Although a natural part of group process to be embraced, conflict is often feared by group workers.

TIP: Welcome conflict. Take your time. Don't rush to resolution. Allow for members to explore differences. View conflict as an opportunity to develop a culture of respect as various life experiences, values, and beliefs are shared. Conflict provides an opportunity for members to really listen and understand unfamiliar points of view, reach for clarification and improve communication skills. When addressed honestly and fully, conflict adds an important dimension to members' relationships and increases confidence that problems can be solved in the group. Conflict helps to build, not destroy groups. **Don't elude conflict, embrace it.**

PARENTAL PAUSE PAGE HUH?!?

Parental Pause Page (PPP) is an occasional page dedicated to parents of teens and pre-teens

Fall - 2001

Fall Reading for Parents

The nice cool, crisp days of autumn are here. This is a great time to curl up with a cup of coffee and a good book. Here are a few books that will be great reading for parents.

📖 *The Underground Guide to Teenage Sexuality*; by Michael J. Basso; Fairview Press; Minneapolis, Mn.; 1997; \$14.95.

Written by Michael J. Basso, member of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists, this book presents a literal survey course for parents on teenage sexuality. Covering everything from the biology of sex and guides to the male and female reproductive systems all the way to a glossary of sexual street slang, the book offers parents a realistic guide for talking about and guiding their teens through sexual growth and development. Based in today's reality, the book helps parents approach their teen's sexuality with meticulous, up-to-date, reflective information. Basso addresses important issues about responsibility, being prepared, and

health. This book is a must for every parent's bookshelf. Whatever you thought you already knew, be prepared to learn more! *Note:* The book contains very graphic language and illustrations.

📖 *When Nothing Makes Sense* by Gerald Deskin, PhD, MFCC; Greg Steckler, MA, MFCC; Fairview Press, Minneapolis, Mn.; 1997; \$12.95.

Floods, Earthquakes, Avalanches, Fires. Everyone's life is indelibly changed when traumatic events occur. Our life experiences shape who we will become and how we will live our lives ever after. Whether that change is slight or great, disaster is altering and irrevocable. This book talks about ways in which parents can help their children and themselves prepare for and cope with catastrophic occurrences and the crisis-related anxiety that follows. As we continue to face increasing violence and disaster in our society, this book offers skills parents can use in the real world in which we live today.

📖 *Why Good Coaches Quit - And How You Can Stay in the Game* by John

Anderson; Rick Aberman, PhD; Fairview Press; Minneapolis, Mn.; 1999; \$15.95.

This book begins with the words: "The coaching I love. The kids, I love. It's the other stuff you have to watch out for. Watching out for *the other stuff* is what this book is all about." John Anderson is Head Baseball Coach for the University of Minnesota. Dr. Rick Aberman is a sports psychotherapist who specializes in athletic counseling and leadership team building. This book is unique in that it not only talks about the issues that coaches face, it also includes personal comments from both of the authors: Anderson talks about the reality of coaching, giving experiential material and Aberman offers theory and background - these two perspectives give this book a richness of information which can only come when all sides of an issue are examined. Not only valuable to professional coaches, the book will give parents and amateur coaches much information, insight, and anecdotal texture. It will help coaches gain much-needed perspective. The many strategies offered apply to



parenting in a very real sense - because parents are most assuredly their children's life coaches - it truly is all about "The Other Stuff."

📖 *Street Gang Awareness: A Resource Guide for Parents and Professionals* by Steven L. Sachs; Fairview Press; Minneapolis, Mn.; 1997; \$12.95.

Offering a complete picture of street gangs, their evolution, behavior, and importance to kids, Steven Sachs presents a serious book for our time. Street gangs can destroy a community. Being aware of gangs, their signals, rituals, and symbols, can help communities build safety nets that will stop their growth. This book can be pretty scary, the author doesn't pull punches - but
(over)

Continued from ...

Fall Reading for Parents
the information is so comprehensive that it leaves no stone unturned. It provides essential details that every parent and professional will find significant. The problem of street gangs is pervasive - from the affluent suburbs to the urban ghetto, street gangs are everywhere and we ignore them at our own risk. The material in this book is substantive and well worth the read.

Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour



Focus on Teenage Violence

Are there too many guns around and can teens get their hands on them too easily? Even though there are many who buy the stupefying illogic that guns are not a problem, the majority of Americans do not agree. If this question seems tired to you - it does to me too. But the scientific community added only last week a new and startling factor that is bound to influence how we assess teenage behavior. In an article that appeared in the *New York Times* on March 10th, Dr. Daniel R. Weinberger, a neuroscientist who directs the Clinical Brain Disorders Laboratory of the National Institutes of Health writes, "Everyone gets angry, everyone has felt a desire for vengeance. The capacity to control impulses that arise from these feelings is a function of the prefrontal cortex. The 15 year old brain does not yet have the biological machinery to inhibit impulses in the service of long-range planning." He continues, "This is why it is so important for adults to help children make plans and set rules. They are, in effect, providing children with a lend-lease prefrontal cortex during all those years that it takes to grow one."

It has taken us some time and numerous casualties to get a handle on the so-called irrational behavior of extreme teenage violence. The picture is getting a little clearer now. We'll soon have fewer excuses to not take action that reduces the odds of an episode of violence happening in our own backyard.

It's important that modern brain research is confirming what every past civilization already knew, but which only *our* so-called "liberated" civilization has foolishly forgotten about children and youth: "too much, too soon" cannot be "too good."

* This item is excerpted from Marion S. Levine's March 29, 2001 column, *Parenting*, which appears monthly in all eighteen Anton Community Newspapers on Long Island, New York. Ms. Levine is the Executive Director/CEO of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center.

Farewell

Farewell,
To incarceration of the mind
Glazed eyed,
Sleep deprived
Cattle herded through
Iridescent Hallways
Caged in class rooms
And stripped of their freedom

Take off that hat?
-that!

Farewell

Farewell to the bell
That - bell
That pierces through
Daydreams
And sense the sheep
Running madly to their slaughter
Farewell

Farewell to the weak minds
That bend to the will
of these brick walls
And hide behind the illusion of popularity

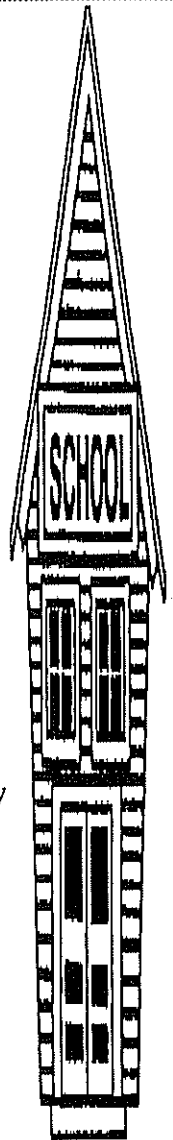
Farewell to
Anorexia, Bulimia
Depression and suicide
And all the stories
That are never told
But masked behind
A sweet smile and a pretty face

Farewell to Drug deals
in Dark Corners
Cigarette Smoke
In a bathroom stall
And bong hits
With the rising of the sun
To help ease the pain that
Spending another day in this place brings

Farewell to sideways glances
From teachers crippled by time
And left sputtering sarcastic verses
To sleeping children
Who don't and won't care about anything

Farewell to oppression
And repression
Farewell to closed minds
And blind eyes
Farewell to words that hurt worse than any punch
Farewell to ID Cards
And sneaking out to lunch
Farewell to all the trivial bull I go through each day
But most of all I say farewell to my childhood
For I lost it somewhere within these walls
And I've grown up, I've moved on
So Farewell.

by David Kaufstein, 18
Senior, Huntington High School
Winter - 2001



SAVE THE DATE
March 8, 2002

*Group Work: The Hidden
Treasure in Youth
Development*

**Full Day Professional Conference
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and more ...*

If you would like to receive the conference brochure,
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Jane E. Yazdpour at: (516) 626-01971 Ext. 309.

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