

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

Number 49

September/October 1996

This Newsletter is issued by a growing association of people who are, in conjunction with the Foundation for Community Encouragement of the USA (FCE), committed to developing community building in Britain beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum'.

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Definition 1. (Taken from various places)

A community is a group of two or more people who have been able to accept and transcend their differences regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds

(social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.) This enables them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together toward goals identified as being for their common good. The word 'community' can refer to a specific group of people (a geographical community, a church congregation) or it can describe a quality of relationship

From the Editor

Thank you again to everyone who has contributed items for this edition of the newsletter. I have delayed publication slightly so that one or two important items could be included, and I hope this has not inconvenienced you.

Presentations

I saw Christmas decorations in the shops last week and this reminded me that I have been wondering whether any of you might like to offer friends gifts relating to community building. At the moment all I can offer are a subscription to this newsletter (which a few of you have already given to friends), or the booklet on 'Ongoing Community' advertised on a later page. How about giving someone (part of) the fee to attend an event? I am sure we could arrange a gift voucher if you are interested.

I have other ideas for items we might develop that could be used as presents, and could raise a little money for CBI funds. How about envelope re-use stickers, or posters, or notelets, or T-shirts - with wording relevant to community building? Have you other ideas? Would anyone be interested in buying such things? Can you think of any relevant quotations or slogans? Is this consistent with what we are seeking to achieve? Do let me know.

GrassRoots Community Building

I have just been asked by a friend to be involved in a small group with her and her husband, within which she can come to think and talk about some ongoing decisions she must make - and be challenged. I have agreed to be part of the group on the conditions that I come as I am (with my own agenda, problems, hang-ups and feelings), and that as a group we allow ourselves the freedom to be ourselves, to reflect on the processes, and to become an ongoing community. It seems that this is consonant with my friend's vision, although she has no experience of explicit 'community building'.

I do seek to build community in my family and at work, but in both of these I am only partially successful, so I have been looking for another context in which I could do it without too many complications. It might be that this little group is one step on the way, but it does raise the big question in me - "What do I do now?". What are the essentials I should bring, what practical things should we do, how do I communicate without jargon, how do I allow other 'group dynamic' visions to come in, how much do I lead or follow, how do we balance the needs of my friend for her decisions and our needs as a group etc. etc.? I have found Jerry's booklet on 'Ongoing Community' very useful, but I need to separate out the important aspects so I can bring them as part of me into situations which I do not control.

The Essential Question

As I see it, the essential question is 'How, in very practical terms and with little training, do I help to build community where I am, with whomever I am with?' I have found Jemima's take-away menu useful to ponder over, and have also gained from several articles in previous issues, but I am still a bit lost on the practicalities. Perhaps the training sessions Cliff has mentioned will help me? If you have experiences or insights I would love to hear from you.

Apologies

I treated myself to some more technology for my birthday - firstly a scanner that can scan in pictures and text, and then manipulate them, and secondly thousands of 'clip-art' pictures. So if you see odd things appearing in future issues you will know I am playing with my new toys! But it also hopefully means you can send me typed pages and I do not need to retype them, and I can easily copy in pictures.

I also treated myself to two days of quiet reflection, which I used to formulate some thoughts on 'Next Generation Community Building' - and posted it to the NGCB internet group. I enjoyed the time to myself. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter, and I look forward to receiving

based on certain values and principles.

Definition 2.

Reaching community is both intentional and challenging. The group process requires that an individual give up learned defenses and habitual ways of behaving. Through increased responsibility, risk and vulnerability of its members, a group develops into a “safe place” providing an environment of acceptance, appreciation of human diversity, and nurturance of

For some reason there have only been two people at the last two CB meetings at my flat in West Hampstead. I would hazard a guess that it's because of the summer break i.e. no meetings in June or July. So this is a reminder that the ongoing monthly group meeting is still very much in place. If you feel moved to meet do please come along.

At the August meeting Yvonne Poulson and I were the only participants but what a meeting that was! I - dare I say we? - really did discover the meaning of “deep communion” not only with each other but with the elements. As thought and feeling became more and more meaningful the weather decided to join in a synchronistic dance of streaks of blue lightning and claps of thunder.

After nearly 2 months, I am still coping with ripples of anger about the Southampton (Park Place) CB event, from those participants who think it should never have happened. It is clear that some people left with experiences that had been consistently negative, or had been unhelpful, or had left them less able to cope with life than they had been before the event. As one of the local coordinators, I had extracted £97 from them to pay for this. The outcome had arisen from a number of factors: the venue, which had shortened the usual time available; the existence of “factions” among groupings prior to the event; confusions in the initial planning; the presence of some people working through very powerful personal issues. The question that arises is, what can be learnt?

Lessons?

Some, whom I hope will also be writing to the newsletter, felt that the format of the CBiB Experience inevitably contains a danger that people may be psychologically damaged as a result, despite the warnings that are currently in the preliminary literature. I personally think that people are tougher than that. I do feel, however, that there are important lessons to be learned about both the initial preparation and the follow-up, concerned with the uncertainty surrounding what may happen, and issues of care safety.

The uncertainty arises from the trajectory of the CB process within a fixed time frame. If it proceeds slowly, then the group will inevitably be left, as we were, in a very painful place at a point where time is running out. If the pain is such that strong resistances have been set up to the process, then it will not be possible to heal, or even decently to tidy up, before the group departs. People need, therefore, to be aware that they are taking a gamble: they are possibly great rewards, but there is also the possibility of loss.

Safe?

Related to this is the question of care within the group. The process, as I experienced it, firmly but implicitly placed the responsibility

for making the environment a safe one on the group itself. While some members responded to this and exercised care for others, many members reported to me that they had, to the end, felt the group as a whole lacking in protective care. I experienced no feeling that the structure as a whole was caring: I felt no guarantee that anyone would intervene to protect me from gross physical or psychological abuse. I find this the most difficult issue to cope with - which has delayed my writing until now.

Mutual Care?

Does this perception that the group is unsafe mean that it was “really” unsafe? The goal of the process is to reach a point of genuine caring by the group; but might not this goal be helped if it was made more explicit that the overall framework of the structure was itself caring? My own impression, comparing the outcome of this CBiB experience with that of related groups that I have attended, is that the growth of love within the group is in fact assisted by an affirmation, within the process, mediated by the facilitators, of a caring intention from the start, and not merely the hope that care will emerge at the end. Indeed, to come clean with my own agenda, I cannot give wholehearted support to CBiB, or any organisation, unless it is the case that an appropriate expression of mutual care is present at all levels.

We live in a world that is becoming increasingly cut-throat. The CB process uncovers and leads one to express and face the aggression and intolerance behind this. But underneath, in setting the boundaries to what will happen, in setting the ultimate values behind the process, there needs to be the assurance that within a CBiB experience the ethic of the cut-throat free for all is definitively rejected.

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1. Next meeting but one will be on 18th -20th April 1997. Anne M and Sharon will sort out the venue for January , possibly the Abbey in Oxford or the house in Kilmington if available, or Anybody's Barn again.

2. Anne R taking minutes, writing decisions in the Black Book, speaking to Cliff and sending minutes to the newsletter.

3. Finances

We have £500 in the kitty and a gift of £1000 is on its way which would take us to the end of 1996 at least. We discussed the possibility of asking for a certain percentage from each event for the training fund. Erica will look at this. We discussed the financial implications of the 2 and 3 way model.

For workshops, organisational negotiations should be dealt with/ referred to the support person - the support person does not have to be in the holding group. We are not assuming a preference for the 2 or 3 way model. The 3 way model could be better for the new CBW.

4. Community Insights Rewrite

Anthony, Angelo and Erica will probably be part of a working party along with volunteers from the joint meeting to come up with a suggested new format. Please give Anthony changes before or at the joint meeting (19th-20th October 1996). Anthony has a suggested new format and will send copies to people not at this meeting.

5. Feedback on Edinburgh - Stages

Colin and Erica had a difficulty in different perceptions re the stages the group had been in and the way they reviewed the stages. This was worked out by actually revealing what had happened and explaining the stages in different ways. This worked well as an explanation as it was a live experience and also used different senses.

6. Feedback from Diversity Group

Gerri talked through some notes from the diversity group at the CCC (in Toronto). This struck lots of chords in the group.

7. Feedback from Recent Workshops

Southampton - Michael expressed regret that he had not encouraged participants to criticise the facilitation in the light of the 'living from chaos' emphasis from Gerry. Michael and Chrissie experimented with facilitation style and 'holding lightly' (i.e. not hanging on for dear life). This felt more comfortable. We discussed an incident which had led to a lot of discomfort and some complaints.

Men's workshop - It went well. things happened outside of the circle format and it worked well when participants were clear about what they wanted. Two people wanted to do something for the group, and it was harder to resist and say no outside the circle format and hard to come together in a circle afterwards without processing what had happened. Michael and Colin participated much more than usual as facilitators.

Edinburgh - Erica said the 3-way model was interesting with 3 strong personalities and disagreements tended to be between 2 people. The dots exercise gave a complicate and chaotic result, and could only really say everyone has a different experience. Erica and Colin had a serious disagreement which surprised Erica as they have worked together for 5 years, and it raised questions about how effectively we communicate and if we share the values we think we do.

8. How do we Deal with Abuse in the Workshop?

We recognise that abuse (and also mis-use) of the circle is an extremely important issue which facilitators have responsibility around. However it became clear that we would not be able to come up with clear-cut criteria for when

abuse is happening, nor with tight guidelines for how to deal with it. The bottom line is that it should be made clear it has been noticed - different facilitators would have different ways of trying to counteract it.

9. Exit Surveys and Customer Complaints

Gerri, Michael Jacobs, Anne M and Erica will look at being part of group to deal with this.

10. What am I looking for in a Co-leader?

We discussed: what does it mean to build community with my co-leader and the issues that might come up and how we might deal with them; imbalance of power, lack of respect, lack of trust, lack of support, intimacy and needs, sexuality. Chrissie also asked us what we might do to address the issues with people we are not currently prepared to co-lead with.

Some people shared how difficult it can be to resume 'normal' life after the intense experience of co-leading with someone.

11. Discernment of Facilitators for Future Events

Joint Meeting 19-20 Oct - We agreed to decide who could co-facilitate on the Friday before this event. We spent a long time discussing issues raised by the prospect of this meeting.

Leader Meeting 18-19 Jan - Michael Jacobs and Ian will co-lead.

Monkton Wyld 7-9 Feb CBE - Anne R and Mike Roth will co-lead. Debbie and Sharon are considering interning and will do so in consultation with Monkton Wyld via Cliff. the training fund will pay for the interns if necessary.

Resources Available

via Peter Cooper (see back page)

Book: "Ongoing Community" by Jerry Hampton - £5 inc p&p

Past copies of the CBiB newsletter, and index

Book lists and other FCE material on the internet

"mv2spk" on-line community

FCE and ACE newsletters

Paper: "Adventure Education: Two Approaches" by Armando Magnino

I am also trying to see if the following can be made available in the UK VHS format:

Video: "Searching for Community"

12 Further Training

Gerri suggests a training that allows people to develop an understanding of the model and process for any purpose, rather than potential facilitators only. Cliff is keen to look at the possibility of a 4-5 day event with a group who want to meet regularly afterwards for about a year and ants to get a group to discuss this at the joint meeting.

13 Safe Working Practices/ Fitness to Lead

We wondered about how we know what's happening to people in between times and if someone might be in a different space in 2-3 months time that we are not aware of it.

14 Residential Events

These often start with a session on the evening before so Anthony suggests we bear this in mind.

15. Three-way Facilitation

There is a letter from Ruth. We agreed we are still using 2-way and 3-way models depending on the circumstances.

16. Joint Meeting

Christopher is arranging venue - Debbie will speak to him tonight re going further north.

17. National Gathering

Planned for the first bank holiday in May, Anthony and Ian are convening this and would like assistance preferably from two more women.

Extracts from my personal journal, the day after the Men's CB event in July - Andy Wood, co-organiser

I feel very good this morning. I feel alive. I feel warm in my stomach. The channel to my heart is open and I feel receptive to loving and being loved. And I'm noting how strange this all feels when generated from the company of men.

Everything organisationally went very smoothly. We received lots of accolades for the initiative, the name and organising the event - which felt really good. Everyone who booked turned up (22 participants) which meant we just about broke even.

The Experience

I find it impossible to chart the progress of the group, but it was a very powerful experience using the CB process to be in a men's workshop (just as I had imagined it would be).

The uniqueness of offering space to the group to create its own activities on the third day was also an amazing experience for a CB event. And the group handled the tension between the desire to 'do' ritual and to be in a circle brilliantly. (This truly was a "group of all leaders"). I guess it was resolved for us by realising - and honouring - the circle itself as being ritual, and that being in a ritual was what was on offer, not doing a ritual. The sacred space of the circle in our meeting room simply became the sacred space in the glade where we created our rituals.

My Feelings

In the circle I realised I had a lot of anxiety about being accepted into the company of men. I shared this at different times and in different ways without being able to let the anxiety go completely. Related to this was my anxiety around being one of the hosts: trying to make sure it was 'okay' for everyone and afraid of people being upset with me if it wasn't going the way they expected. I became very conscious of just how important it is to me that everybody likes me. I realise that this is my

insecurity about not being included, and of being targeted for abuse if I stand out as different for what I believe in - particularly in the company of men. The other side of this is my habit of dismissing other men who appear to be different from me; who are macho and/or conventional. It's my defence against possible attacks and it separates me from them.

It was such a diverse group of men that I had to face up to this and work through it. We weren't all New Age men, weren't all 'PC', weren't all into 'whoha-ing' in the woods, weren't all gentle or boisterous. We were all men willing to take our next step in our manhood by being present in that circle, and sitting with our vulnerability as men, with men. My personal thanks to each one of you.

Postscript

It is my intention to hold another men's event in 1997. I would like to hear from men who would be interested in helping to organise and run it, and would be able to meet this autumn to begin doing so.

*Please call me on 01908 22249
or 01222 227946;
or write to
16 Spencer Street,
New Bradwell,
Milton Keynes, MK13 0DW.*

A time to review where I am with it all after 2 or 3 years of attending events, helping organise a couple (one gone and one coming up), reading The Mans book(s), writing newsletter articles and generally hanging around CBiB.

This is it really, I've written my own theories, adapted CB theory and practise for my own groups; specifically a men's group and as a meeting structure for a campaign group - we became a very efficient, very egalitarian group with lots of people generating good, exciting ideas, but to my mind, quite dry, we had little or no time for personal sharing, just lots of efficient, daring business - so we had a party and a Community Building / Stress Management session as potential solutions. Time will tell what effect the CB session had but those few who attended seemed more relaxed afterwards.

What else?

Well, in all my new projects I use community building - bits of what I've learnt from CB events. The projects I've worked on have been adventures - well for me they have - and I have consistently spent time building community (though we didn't call it that) with the people I worked on things with, before, during and after we made our plans, and I don't really like doing it any other way. The ultimate was planning my Christmas Holiday (30 gay men in a Youth Hostel in South Wales - the Queen's Speech will never be the same again!), when I would hitch up to Nottingham and spend 3 days with my fellow conspirator, Beano. We would gossip and talk and spend time exploring how we felt about the event, who we wanted to come (though they probably wouldn't), who we would have difficulty with and would rather wish they didn't (though we knew we couldn't turn them away), what we wanted for our holiday, what we didn't and finally we wrote down what we needed to be done or put the advertising and mailouts together. After 3 relaxed but quite intense days we would have 3 sides of A4. Madness, you may think, or the self-indulgent luxury of two

unemployed hippie drongos, but in the end various people commented on our organisational skills (they called it 'Organised Chaos') and noted, with good humour, that we were old hippie anarchists and several said it was the best week of their lives, best Christmas ever, best holiday etc. They had no reason to lie, so I guess I have to believe them.

My other projects work in similar ways, though meetings are usually 1 afternoon and not 3 days. Usually I find that the business in hand is in the forefront of my mind, but not really available, but that other things of equal depth (a tarot reading perhaps, the lives of friends, our family, love lives, health and work), after which work becomes more available. And always the Questions are: 'How are we getting on?', 'How am I/we feeling, right now and about this project?' The idea is to always hold the project in mind but to honestly admit when it feels no longer possible to continue and to do something else that enables us to become, hopefully, closer, then continue with work when possible.

The rest of life

So this is how I plan Summer camps, Christmas holidays and benefit gigs, but what of the rest of my life? Well there's the rub; it's a mess, or barren. No longer completely chaotic, with personal relationships that make up and break up, no drug addicts or mad people (including me) dominating my consciousness, just floating round the edges pleasantly; and where possible I leave places where I feel attacked, but I bear lots of grudges and am pissed off with lots of people, and I feel I have praise and gratitude that I could voice to friends and colleagues (my fellow unemployed hippie drongos) but withhold.

So that's the way it is. I no longer bitch or write people off, OK. that's exaggeration, but I believe when I do, bitching and writing people off is a stage towards reconciliation (it certainly helps me!). But I feel out of step with 'Community' in my daily life. Perhaps I expect too much but I do remember when life

was different.

Men Behaving Boldly

Except, with 'Men Behaving Boldly' Andy and I haven't spent lots of time 'building community' as we make our plans. We spent a day at Michael's discussing our proposed Men's CB event (originally Andy's idea, with me as his sidekick / secretary, but more a partnership now) and reached a fair level of trust. We still have to negotiate our relationship with Coin and Michael - our CB facilitators - but hopefully we all know that task lies ahead, but apart from that Andy and I meet for the occasional hour to do sums and plan leaflets. This, I believe, is partly because the time is just not available to us and partly because we have been in community before and we know we will be again, both before and at the event (OK. we don't know it, but the faith is there - mine is anyway) and because Andy was good to me once, very good, though I didn't know it at the time - but that is another story.

personal growth, healing and self-discovery.

Definition 3.

A community is defined as a group of people who, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds, have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together toward goals identified as being

We are going to have a second special issue of the newsletter on 'community building and other approaches to helping organisations'. Eileen Conn and I will be working on this, aiming for publication towards the end of 1997. This stems from our recognition that CB fits into a history of thinking and practice, and there are many different ways of enabling people to live and work better together. Eileen has long been interested in this subject, as those of you who have read her articles in previous newsletters will know, and she can be contacted on 0171 639 1591.

Can I also remind you of the special issue that Armando Magnino and I are doing on 'community building and personal relationships', including committed

Update

Men Behaving Boldly happened, and they did behave very boldly indeed. Andy and I were close at times, and talked over what I had written about in this article. He liked what I had written so I decided to let it stand and publish it.

So what now?

Carry on I suppose and see what happens - perhaps look at a few problems and challenges (from friends dying, to putting on a gig, to work) and see if I can build community around them, a logical progression from going to large or small CB events (CB circles, 12 step programmes, gay men's weeks), or organising events that specifically include an element of community building (i.e. the event I have talked about so far in this article - summer camps and gay men's weeks, Men Behaving Boldly) and seeing, if I really can heal my life by the simple expedient of doing what I want when I want and stopping it when I don't like it any more.

partnerships. We will be working together on it, aiming for the April 1997 issue. If you would like to contribute in some way, or find out more, then please contact Armando at 21 Aylesford Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV31 2AL Tel: 01926 337409.

We will keep you informed through the newsletter as to how things are developing, and about the issues that are arising. We hope that several of you will feel moved to write of your experiences, draw pictures, write poems, or share thoughts. We also intend to do things like commission contributions, invite thoughts from abroad, and reproduce relevant passages from books.

Peter Cooper

What I want to show you is that a take-away is possible - so many times I have been in a CB workshop and heard or even expressed myself the sadness of an apparent inability to 'take CB out into the wider world'. Well it is very possible. And this is how I arrived at that conclusion. Please excuse the mix-up of personal experience with thoughts / ideas. This seems to be how I work at present.

North London Meeting Experience

At the monthly CB meeting at Tom's house in Muswell Hill at the end of June, I talked a lot. Actually, I felt as though I talked far too much, perhaps it was having been separated from CB circles and groups for so long. Anyway, some of the things I talked about were quite interesting, I found myself saying things as I thought them with a spontaneity that interested me.

Some of the words that poured forth from my mouth appeared to be coming from my innermost being, bypassing my normal thought processes and therefore unaffected by the usual censorship of my conscious mind. One of these utterances was about how I was taking CB with me into the wider world, or rather how I was *not allowing the wider world to stop the experiencing of CB in me*.

I was quite impressed with that.

Well anyway I have been thinking about it and decided it was time to write something important and interesting for the magazine, so being a retiring and modest person here is my construction of the **Community Building Take Away Menu:-**

Introduction - Stages and Boundaries

Community Building has four 'stages' - each with positive (+) and negative (-) aspects (like two sides of a coin):-

- Pseudocommunity (PS),
- Chaos (CH),
- Emptiness / Emptying (E) and
- Community (♥).

I have chosen the symbol (♥) for the 'community' stage because calling it (C) is too close to (CH) for my liking. Anyway, I want to overemphasise the community stage to represent a kind of anti-emphasis because I think far too much time is spent paying attention to whether we are 'in community' or not and far too little time is spent considering the ebb and flow between, through and around all four stages. I also think it is a big mistake calling the fourth stage 'community'. It allows people to assume that it is that fourth stage that we are aiming for and nothing much else matters - but ♥ cannot exist in isolation and cannot be reached except by a path that transveres the other stages.

The difficulty in discussing the CB process is partly to do with the limitation of using a

verbal language. Language has set parameters and structures and boundaries. I dislike the boundaries that are created in my head when considering CB to be an experience with FOUR stages. I dislike it because I find myself labelling my experience instead of just being whatever it is I am in the moment. Who gives a damn if it's CH or ♥ as long as it's REAL and fluid? Community building is about authentic communication and inclusivity not about touching nirvana. And anyway when I'm groping around in something non-♥ I know it because it feels different.

CBIB Take Away Menu - Starter

One of the biggest challenges of my life has been to recognise the boundaries I create **EVERYWHERE** for myself. Boundaries between night and day (who can really say when day ends and night begins?), between one day and the next (telephone a friend in Hong Kong at tea time and see how they feel about tea in the middle of the night), between love and hate (how come I can love the person who is sometimes the most hateful to me?).

My inability to 'take-away' CB from workshops or monthly meetings has been my habit of constructing boundaries everywhere including an "ending" boundary when workshops or CB meetings close. When my watch stopped the day after the CB meeting in Muswell Hill I felt a sense of freedom - do you know that watch has had the same battery for nearly 4 years? And now that it needs a new one I feel liberated? Not because it is my only watch but because it was the perfect moment for that watch to stop - 10 minutes to eight on a Monday evening and there it is - at the same time "holding the moment" from the day after my unbounded experiences in Tom's House and reminding me that I can "hold the moment" too!

So the starter on our CB 'Take-Away' menu has to be

Unboundedness with a dash of Fluidity

Once the *expectation* of the CB experience ending when the workshop ends has been annihilated, the *actuality* of the CB experience ending can also be given the boot. I have always found it a hard shock to go out into the cold cruel world after CB. But in the last few months I have discovered so many valuable experiences in PS, in CH and in E as well as in ♥ that I have revised my views about when experience is 'CB' and when it is not along with dissolving the perceived boundaries between the so-called stages of community building and the beginnings and endings of workshops.

One of the things I now value most as an experience (looking back, you understand) is not wanting to live. More than not wanting to live was the feeling that if I died I wouldn't mind, I really would not mind, and there was nothing that I would want to hold on to that would make it painful to die. Now that is seriously weird. But it has added a fluidity to my being that I didn't have before and allowed me to accept things that have been unacceptable before by broadening my sense of awareness of possibilities - opening out my sense of inclusivity to experience. I find myself speaking with words that have not been censored by thoughts - it's not that I don't plan what I want to say, I do. It's just that sometimes when I speak something quite unexpected comes out of my mouth and then I

feel surprised because it was not what I was planning on saying but it makes perfect sense. Almost as though I have opened a direct channel to my intuition and my intuition says 'if this idea goes via the thought processes it will never make it to daylight - sod that - send it out via the direct route'!

To quote Scott Peck "It is because our conscious self resists our unconscious wisdom that we become ill".

I feel I'm becoming well again.

Main Course choices

Maybe I have been digressing a little, but really this is all part of the menu. You see, to choose from the main courses available:-

Pseudocommunity (PS)
Chaos (CH)
Emptiness / Emptying (E)
Community (♥)

is not necessarily a choice. Unlike a regular menu in a regular take-away these main course choices might just be made by other people, or by the situation, or by something else entirely, or (as in a workshop) experienced through a joint intention to share a process of experience. What is important in remaining in community building mode is that we ***accept that main course choice and work with it***. It might not be our favourite flavour (which is probably ♥), but it is what it is. It is only part of the CB experience if we bring ourselves to it in our CB awareness. Leaving a group of people whose aim is to reach ♥ is bound to be painful if ♥ is seen as the goal - the moment of heaven to be touched. But it isn't. CB is much more than ♥ and anyway - what about the negative side of ♥? In my view negative ♥ is a new and interesting route to *exclusivity* rather than *inclusivity*. Maybe that is why it has felt so bad to leave a workshop. The workshop has (intentionally and out of necessity) excluded the wider world in order to explore the community building process to its greatest depths.

Part of my realisation of this was verbalising the pain of living with someone whose way of being is poles apart from CB and how awful that is. But now I can (sometimes) celebrate that experience because through it I have learnt that I have had the opportunity to be in a CB experience with her some of the time (usually PS+ or CH- or even E- or ♥-) (which in case I have lost you a little represents the positive side of pseudocommunity and the negative side of chaos and the negative sides of E or ♥ - a fairly naff combination admittedly). Looked at in these terms it is entirely understandable that I was able to love someone who was horrid to me - ***we have both been struggling and striving*** and **THAT** is exactly what the CB experience is - constant hard work. My judgement of her as being poles apart from CB is a load of rubbish in this context, so not only do I gain an understanding of how much in community I was with her at times, I also gain by inference an understanding of how much CB has been in my life all along. What I failed to do for a long time was the hard work of making a decision about ending / moving on. But maybe

that's because it was not the right time. Anyone who has read Stuart Wilde's books will be aware of the value of doing nothing until it feels right - and when it feels right you'll just do it anyway. It's the discomfort of *not-knowing* and *waiting* that gets to me the most. In a world of instant decisions where no-one stays still for more than a microsecond, sitting in the muddy puddle of not-knowing and holding that is pretty tough.

Dessert

So having savoured the starter, and relished whatever main course was dished up, what delicious surprise could be in store for dessert?

I am usually well masked for my daily life but I am beginning to realise that if I unmask by just a little in almost any situation, something paradoxical usually happens. I don't know whether the experience becomes a CB experience or whether I simply recognise the CB elements to it, but once that tiny chink in the armour of the mask has appeared, the situation always seems to change.

So our dessert must be:-

A Slice of Real Self served with just a touch of Unmasking

But unlike the rest of the menu, this section is more of a give-away rather than a take-away, because it is only by showing a little of ourselves from under the mask that we are consciously taking part in a CB experience. I am almost embarrassed by the way I do this, especially when what I say bypasses my conscious processing. This must be because it is a new way of behaving in the world and the responses of other people are less predictable because I have less experience of this way of being. I also forget that this paradox exists and revert to the bad old ways of behaving. But it doesn't matter much, it just means I'm not yet able (or ready?) to be vulnerable at times, or maybe I am just not ready to give up feeling vulnerable.....What do other people think?

*Jemima Jefferson
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Interlude

How many Community Builders does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one. Any more and it would take a century to reach a consensus.....("well it might be nicer to stay in the dark"..... "which one of us is going to do it? Can we all do it together?" "60 watt or 100 watt - it makes a big difference to the amount of light" "Let's just hold hands and stand in a circle for a while and then decide...")

Ok it was a rotten joke.

Jemima.

Women in Wonderland

I really did enjoy reading Armando's report of Men Behaving Boldly. I haven't seen him for ages, but could hear his voice speaking from the page as I read. Thanks Armando and I hope you have managed to hold onto your 'take-away' from Men Behaving Boldly.

But what about a women's event? I remember talking about it to several women a couple of years ago, but nothing came of it (I guess we were all too busy with our girly knitting and housework and stuff...). Then in June I had this urge to write out the title 'Women in Wonderland' in my journal. I kept wondering why. I still don't know. Maybe it's book I am going to write, or maybe it's the title of the CB women's event that hasn't yet been organised.....

Anyway, I'm not doing it alone. Anyone else interested please give me a call. If there are enough of us to organise it maybe it might happen. If not, I still think it's a good idea.

Luv, kisses, hugs and teddy bears to you all

Booklet for Sale **Ongoing Community** **(Small Share/Support Groups)** **Formation and Maintenance**

Fourth edition June 1994 By Jerry L. Hampton - 48 pages

Includes

How to start an ongoing group

Model Meetings

Guidelines for meeting conduct

Ideas for group starters

Group maintenance

Ongoing groups and their characteristics

Why some groups fail

Forming groups in a workshop

What now? - After the CBW

Books on community

Study Guide - 'The Different Drum'

Copies available now from Peter Cooper (address on back page)
for only £5 including post and packing.

Jerry Hampton (who has had a long association with community building in the USA) has licenced me to sell copies of his guide, which is now in its fourth edition, and I am making copies available at cost because of the importance I attach to nurturing ongoing groups.

Why am I making this distance, when it doesn't need to be,
Why am I pulling away when I could express the real me;
Why am I so little trusting, of what I have felt from you,
What do I do to restrict me from feeling - then following through;
None of you gave me an inkling of threat to my person, or pain,
So why is it just when I need to be close that I'm distancing me once again.
I want to make rainbows in springtime, to keep with me all the year round,
And just when I start to build colours the old Winter Snow comes around;
I know I have touched what I needed, I know that you've all helped me see,
And now that I've found something precious and good it's slipping away from me.
I feel like I'm in evolution, and taking one step at a time,
And all possibilities stretch out ahead but it's hard to find which of them's mine.
My mask is a feeling of distance and of keeping you all at arm's length,
Of showing my beauty and gladness, of sharing my joy and my strength;
But under my mask I'm just human, I'm scared and I want to be me,
My heart's full of love but my mind's in the way of allowing myself to be free.
I'll give you a piece of JEMIMA, and watch you to see it's OK,
Then I'll give you a piece of my distance to make sure that I keep you away;
I don't know that I want to be gentle, I don't know if I want to be kind,
I don't know what's really inside me - unmasked I fear what I'll find.
Take my hand, help me to conquer, to unmask and set myself free,
Break down the walls of my prison and journey to find the real me.

Taunton: Contact Julia Forse 01823 257371

London: Both groups CB 2-6pm, bring lunch to share from 1pm if you wish, and a cushion. The South London group is no longer meeting. To connect with people who would like to build community regularly with others in South London contact Yvonne Poulson 0171 635 0181.

West Hampstead, North London - Second Sunday each month. 'A seeking after deep communion with others'. Contact Margaret Walsh 0171 794 9158.

Muswell Hill, North London - Usually last Sunday each month. Contact Tom Deevy 0181 444 9764. (This is the long established group which has been meeting in Finsbury Park at Angelo's.)

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event necessary. Contact Tracy 01295 770367 or Debbie 01926 337 409.

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 2301739.

North West England (including Darlington): First Sunday in the month. Road Less Travelled support group. Contact Indi Garcha 01325 468881.

Durham: Long established Road Less Travelled group. Fridays fortnightly. Contact Pat Watson 0191 388 8951.

General Enquiries

about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

Subscription rate [UK]: (Apr-Mar) £8; (Jul-Mar) £6; (Oct-Mar) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.

Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:-

Peter Cooper, 1 Evergreen Close, Woolmer Green, Herts SG3 6JN Tel: 01438 813765 Fax: 01438 814986 e-mail: PeterCBIB@aol.com

*Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by **26th October 1996.***

For convenience of personal contact, the address and telephone number of letter-writers will normally be published, unless other instructions are given. Contributions of any sort (articles, pictures, poems, letters etc.), and of any length, are welcome from all involved in any way with the CBiB network. While every effort will be made to