

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

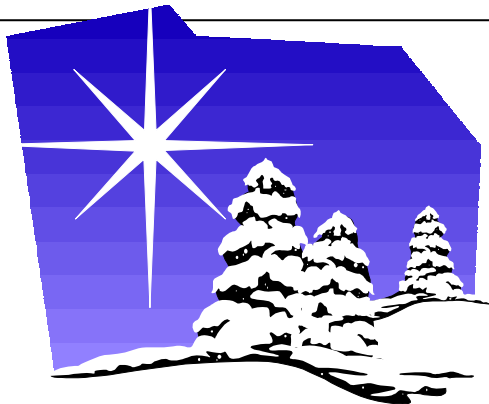
Number 67

January/February 1999

The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).

In this issue:-

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Scheduled Community Building events | page 3 |
| Community Building in Germany | page 4 |
| The Poem of Prayers | page 5 |
| Discovering community building at the "confluence" | pages 6-9 |
| Community Continuity Conference..... | page 9 |
| New addresses | page 9 |
| Report from the Holding Group Meeting | pages 10-11 |
| Letters | pages 11-12 |
| The New Learning Centre | page 13 |
| The New Universe Story, and Ervin Laszlo | page 14 |
| Re-evaluation Counselling | page 15 |
| The Quaker meeting as Community | pages 16-19 |
| About Parents Connected | page 19 |
| Details of local groups..... | page 20 |



Editorial

Training

I have received several letters and fliers from people involved with the CB network who are involved with training etc in parenting, and other related areas of life. I offer them for your information, but of course without any endorsement. If what they have written interests you and you feel moved to contact them I am sure they would be delighted.

Different groups

I have not had time to collate the information I have received from three other very different groups, who seem to be doing things a little similar to what we in CBiB are doing. I hope to be able to put this information into the next edition - the groups are:

- an education service, who use 'circle-time' in schools to address issues
- the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), who use facilitated workshops within prisons in 23 countries to enable people to explore non-violent solutions
- the Christian Life Community, an international network of small (4-8 people) communities committed to regular meetings

I think there are interesting aspects of what they do, and how they structure things, and hope that they will provoke further thoughts.

New phone number

You will see that the holding group decided to try out a new phone system from BT, which enables a single number to be passed around to different people. Therefore for the next six months our number for general enquiries is 07071 880858.

The way it works is that if someone calls this number a member of the holding group (or their answer phone) will answer. Because it is charged at premium rates they will suggest the caller rings them back on their own number.

Accounts

The summary accounts for the newsletter and mailings for calendar year 1998 are:

| <u>Newsletter</u> | | <u>Net</u> |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Income | 1345.17 | |
| Expenditure | -984.06 | +361.11 |
| <u>Network Mailings</u> | | |
| Income | 175.00 | |
| Expenditure | -555.74 | -380.74 |
| <u>Sales of books etc</u> | | |
| Income | 130.00 | |
| Expenditure | -54.95 | +75.05 |
| <u>Other Income</u> | | |
| Donations | 116.76 | |
| Interest | 34.64 | +151.40 |
| <u>Other Expenditure</u> | | |
| <u>Fees, Groups</u> | <u>-148.35</u> | <u>-148.35</u> |
| <u>Total Net Income</u> | | <u>+58.47</u> |

Bank & Building Society

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Balances at beginning of year | 1074.93 |
| less Owed to creditor | -60.00 |
| plus Total Net Income | <u>+58.47</u> |
| <u>Balance at end of year</u> | <u>1073.40</u> |

Net assets

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Balances | 1073.40 |
| less accrued to creditor | -45.00 |
| less Prepaid subscriptions | -24.00 |
| less Allowance for 2 editions | <u>-180.00</u> |
| <u>Total net assets</u> | <u>844.40</u> |

Circulation

| | |
|----------|-----|
| 31/12/96 | 133 |
| 31/12/97 | 196 |
| 17/2/98 | 200 |
| 30/1/99 | 213 |

(continued at foot of next page)

Community Building in Britain Events

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Place</u> | <u>Contact</u> | <u>Fee</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|--------------|
| 27-28 Mar | Edinburgh | Sat/Sun: Vicky 0131 667 9274 Mon-Fri: Lilian 0131 538 1887 | £70 | CBE |
| 16-18 Apr | Abingdon Oxfordshire | Sharon Usher 01235 848132 | £85 £120 residential | CBE |

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

FCE stands for the Foundation for Community Encouragement - the companion organisation to CBiB in the USA

There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.

(Editorial continued from previous page)

Penultimate edition

As you know, the next edition of this newsletter will be the last one that I edit, and I have mixed feelings about it. So far no-one has come forward to take over, or to be part of a team that takes over, so I face the possibility that the momentum and subscribers that have built up may be lost.

On the other hand I know that things must change, and I have to let go. I am very happy to continue with the practical aspects of the newsletter if the new person/team would like me to, but I need to stop doing the editing. I am also looking forward to having a little more time for other things.

See the last edition for more details of what is involved, and call me on 01438 813765 if you might be interested in doing something to help.

Subscriptions

Because of the uncertainty, it does not seem right yet to ask you to renew your subscription for this next year, which starts in April. Various possibilities exist, but if you would like to renew your subscription anyway I would be delighted to receive it. For those who have paid for next year already - I will make sure it is applied in line with what is decided.

The holding group will be addressing the situation of the newsletter at their next meeting, and my final edition will go out after that meeting so you will know the situation then. In the meantime keep sending in contributions for the next edition!

Thanks for your comments

Peter Cooper: Editor

tel: 01438 813765

Community Building in Germany

Teän Stuttaford and Gerri Moriarty went to Germany in October to take part in a Community Building Workshop sponsored by Regina Haß. There was so much interest in the event that a CBE was organised in addition to the planned CBW. After the CBE and CBW interested participants were invited to an additional day to learn more about facilitation, and to discuss the possibility of setting up a German Community Building Network.

The people

Teän and Gerri were participants in the CBW and in the final day's discussion, and Peter Laxton took on a facilitator learning role at all the events. Sue Orpin from Wales attended her first community building event and translated, as did Elke Martens, whom some readers of this report may know as she has been a participant in British workshops.

The events were facilitated by two American facilitators, Carol Langston and Jerry Hampton with much grace and great skill. There were 24 participants in the CBE and 40 in the CBW.

Similarities and differences

We were very moved by the experience of building community in another language and culture. Many things were similar to our experiences with CB in Britain, for example, in the fears we expressed and we felt and in the barriers we erected.

However, there are also many things that differentiate the experience - for example the different experiences in Britain and Germany of war, of peace, of politics, of the use of words and metaphors. We also learned a great deal from the facilitators.

Outcomes

One of the outcomes of the week's events was the first steps to create a German community building network. We were able to pass on some information about CBiB and there has been a formal request to make links between this new network and CBiB. It is also likely that German participants interested in learning

more about community building will travel to some of the workshops happening here in the next few months (e.g. Othona, Norfolk, Edinburgh).

I made connections with

participants and with the work in Germany and hope to be able to continue to support it and to learn from it. It was a challenging and very rewarding experience.



Gerri Moriarty

Teän adds :

I struggled to trust my understanding, deciding (especially in the chaos) that I was not hearing enough of the German. I'd strain to hear the English translation and consequently miss the next bit of German. Crazy-making

However it meant that I listened harder than ever and by the end of the 3 days I knew each member and the group as a whole and its journey and cohesion but had little energy or attention for one:one relating in German outside the circle.

I found the whole process to be a classic of depth, richness integrity and exploration and I was a weeny bit in awe of Carol and Jerry's facilitating, so graceful, gentle and yet surgically precise. I know I was led there, and meant to be there, for reasons far more amazing than the one I dreamt up(!) and I came away with a deep sense of privilege.

Teän Stuttaford

The Poem of Prayers

With beech trees and pressed leaves,
With cool streams and bath-toy boats,
With fresh and pressed grasses,
With garlic-mustard and summer dust,
With dew dropped lettuce and ice shattered cabbage,
With cold shattered hands and mustard hot sandwich,
With this that and the other,
A goodbye-good morning wave from mother,
And the thousand mile walk from the garden gate
To the weight of a lover,
From the Dawn of the World to the death of our Dad,
From spinning top silver twirl to the finger chewed slinky girl,
From Silverkrin images to Anarchist riot,
From storeyville hometown to city slick bar-b-que,
From sex confused easy boy to blown away easy toy,
The World turns every day 'cause life says it is that way,
We pray for the rain knowing it will come someday anyway,
I pray for the rain knowing rain and the cold and the refreshing and
the hurricane,
I pray for the rain knowing prayers and the pain,
I pray.

John Hoggett

16 November 1998

Discovering community building at the “confluence” meeting

Editor's note: I have left Jean's contribution unedited, but note that the Confluence was the first gathering under this name and of this style. There have been gatherings of the network before, and I hope there is again, but there is as yet no plans for another one.

The confluence meeting is a yearly network meeting for active Community Building practitioners. But this year it was opened to a few beginners like me as well. A very diverse 30 people participated, all British except myself. This was my first experience in CB.

Process interleaved

People with various life experiences related to community, including myself, shared their findings by telling and also by replaying some parts of this experience with small groups of participants. Throughout the 3 days a “classical” CB process was interleaved at the rate of 2 sessions a day.

The setting was an old mansion more or less maintained by a few ecologists, in the countryside.

From this experience I conclude that the “circle” process developed by Scott Peck and his followers mixes very well with other complementary approaches.

Exploring CB approaches

During the very first minutes of the first “circle” session, a facilitator gave us a few basic rules. These rules then formed boundaries within which we could open up to be seen as we are. But even for normally mature people, the process of exploring the mutual space in order to get to that stage requires a few days of working together.

The process was often associated with deep joys (for instance of discovering that I am loved as I am) and considerable pain (for instance of having to let go of hopes, beliefs, or glamorous images of self). The threat of the open space, of not knowing what works, of being seen as one is, the threat of the repetition of previous experiences where one has opened up and been slashed somehow, this threat is such that the circle's dynamics were slow and hesitating. Many interventions fell into an arid

void, into which it was easy for me, and others I believe, to project my fears of being rejected.

Working through these fears is an important and inescapable component of the Community Building process, of the maturation of people in community.

Beyond the “circle”?

However we had many opportunities, beyond the circle, to engage in varied, fast, funny transactions with each other: outdoor games, voice improvisation, community theatre, reflecting on Community Building in business and on large group processes, developing shared vision, and dreams, exploring the community practices of the Q'ero Indians, visioning and discussing a video about Community Building in prisons, etc...

All this has somehow “magically” joined in a continuum of community building, each module adding strength to the preceding ones.

Expansion

This was paramount in loosening up relationships from these fears. This is an expansion of the role of meals and breaks in normal CB sessions.

Coming back to the circle after these other transactions, some of the (fear)-patterns set in the previous circle have loosened up, dissolved or at least been thoroughly shaken through. In the process we had picked up enough courage to face the ordeal of self-revelation in the hope that the fun in the other activities might be a forebode of lasting happiness in the community-“circle”.

A single whole process

I had expected a congress where I would meet various people in various settings with community building AND workshops neatly juxtaposed, but the meeting developed into a single whole process

A couple of activities are described below:

Workshop on Community Theatre (Gerri Moriarty)

Gerri began with a few very fast exercises, which literally threw us across the pseudo-community stage; there was no time for fear to unfold. One was necessarily authentic because spontaneous.

1. Set yourselves up in a tight circle; introduce yourself with “I am (your first name)” and some gesture which tells something about you, you can use your whole body.
the rest of the group immediately repeats in unison the words and the gesture;
2. In groups of 3 or 4: you have a few minutes (5’) to prepare an unspoken representation of a well known story: “Goldylocks”, “Little red riding hood”, ... then present your play to the others

After a couple such exercises I found myself across the apprehension of having to face the others in the open, crude light of my real self.

This activity evolved more leisurely:

- “What would you like to bring to this meeting which tells something important about your being in community?” Each in turn told his story.

Gerri has been using similar approaches but over much longer interventions in various situations in the world where social, political, religious, racial conflicts were tearing societies apart (for example in setting up a play in a multiracial Manchester environment).

Workshop on Community Building in business (David Saunders)

David started with the following 3 questions exchanged between pairs of participants

- why are you interested in Community Building in business?
- what does Community Building offer to business?
- can you reveal something about you which nobody here knows?

A few conclusions:

- Company accounts should not only look at the BOTTOM line: profit, energy and costs, but also at the TOP line: happiness, knowledge, ... the intangible enablers that make the bottom line possible
- For many managers in search of performance improvement, Community Building appears to be just another technology for effective communication. Discovering that Community Building is a way of life is a matter of experience
- Most businesses are generally locked up between the phases of pseudo-community and of chaos

Back to the “circle”

The importance of dreams

Each morning a facilitator reminded the circle that Community Building usually triggers interesting dreams in at least a few participants. A beautiful dream was brought up, and in contrast with individual work done in group therapy, here the dream completely

escaped the control of the dreamer. Some of us started using it as a projection screen for our own fantasies.

The dreamer saw his dream escape as a butterfly from its chrysalis. A dream that emerged from one participant appeared to have its roots in many of us.

Facilitation

Explicitly the facilitators took charge of keeping the boundaries and clarifying the rules for everyone. Implicitly their silent care for each member of the group formed a substrate of trust, which could be drawn on by each participant.

The facilitators' non-intervention style was a wonderful opportunity to get hold of ourselves and to take charge (e.g. the dream episode above): I have experienced this as a great help.

Danger?

I suspect however that being left alone with oneself and allowing others to play freely around with one's utterances could seriously impair very unbalanced persons. But on the other hand the group was so full of love, of (extra-)ordinary respect and of just-in-time support for each other, in such a way that no facilitator intervention was ever required badly.

Some difficult situations were cleared by the participants themselves. I felt that the facilitators were holding the participants in such a container of love that this was possible. I also am aware that the participation of at least 50% of veteran community builders in the group contributed very much to the group's self-facilitation.

I can not test my assertion, not having discussed it with the facilitators. I must therefore admit that this might be, at least partly, a projection of me as man on them as women, potential mothers or lovers.

Pseudo-community

Many facilitators see the pseudo-community phase as dysfunctional.

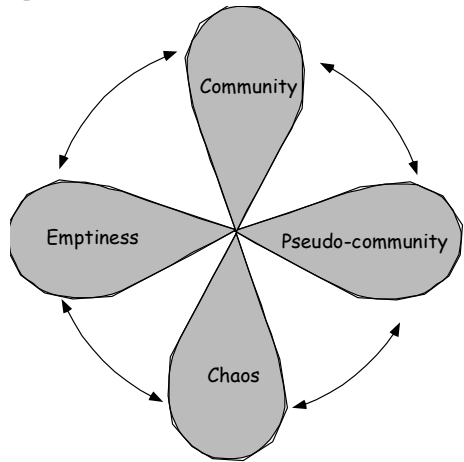
In other previous group experiences a couple of participants including myself had been loaded with guilt by facilitators who had read Bion. They made us admit that fight, flight or collusion behaviour is intrinsically bad and that one ought to stay out of it.

But I have learned to view such behaviour, which has been labelled pseudo-community by Scott Peck, more serenely as the best

behaviour which is available to me and my group in a specific situation, in a specific stage of maturity. It is nothing but a coarsely primitive community stage. What is dysfunctional is to stick to it, to remain blind to other stages.

Each phase has a role

Anne Monger's drawing (I have tried to represent it below) explained beautifully how each phase of the process has a valuable meaning in itself, that each has a role to play in specific situation in our lives' maturation process.



Rather than pushing everyone towards the community phase, implying that other phases are some sort of necessary evil out of which one has to move, she let us go at our speed, staying as long as needed with each stage.

Often intertwined

The drawing also confirms my experience that all the phases do not generally appear in sequence; they are often intertwined.

"Community" is not a final stage of a one way process.

The Community Building process that evolves over a weekend may more or less follow a sequence. But once the weekend is over, one returns to real life. In real life a group is continuously thrown off balance and goes regularly through periods of pseudo-community, of chaos, of emptiness and of community.

If the group does not take the time to reflect and to learn from the repeating cycles, it can then be compared with Sisyphus pushing endlessly the same stone up the hill and seeing it roll back. But if the group does take the time to learn at each stage, the proper metaphor is more an upward spiral; on this

spiral every stage has a meaning and a contribution to Community Building.

Jean Brasseur
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(Belgium)



Community Continuity Conference

The Community Continuity Conference (CCC) is an annual international gathering organised by the Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) in America. It begins in the evening of a Wednesday in late July*, and concludes at 3pm on the Sunday.

Reports from previous conferences back up the comment that it is an event sure to be challenging and inspiring.

It is to be held in the Kempenfelt Centre, a 50-minute drive north of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The nearest airport is Toronto International (Pearson). The Conference Centre is located beside a lake with access to swimming, tennis, hiking, volleyball etc. Weather in July may be hot and humid, but being near the lake makes the humidity less evident.

The Conference fee is \$* and includes accommodation from Wednesday night to Saturday night, meals from Thursday morning to Sunday lunch, and all workshop materials. FCE are building a scholarship fund to make the Conference more accessible to those who need financial assistance.

Further details from
Foundation for Community Encouragement
P.O. Box 17210,
Seattle, WA 98107-0910
Phone: (USA) 206 784-9000
Fax: 206 784-9077
Web: <http://www.fce-community.org>
email: inquire@fce-community.org

** Editor's note: I was unable to get confirmation of dates and price before going to press. See the next edition.*

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Report from the Holding Group Meeting December 5th and 6th

Present: Margaret Walsh, Gerri Moriarty, Teān Stuttaford, Suzy Adderley,
Yvonne Poulson, Anthony Kirk, Cliff Jordan, Peter Cooper, Ruth Goffe, Richard Benzie

In the absence of detailed notes or note-takers at the recent HG meeting on 5/6 December at Douai Abbey, near Newbury, the following is my (informal) report of the two days.

Burning issues

On Saturday morning, having met briefly the previous evening, the group continued to check in and start to air 'burning issues'.

The first to arise was that of money and the way finances are handled within CBiB; the need to take responsibility to plan and discern for the present and future application of budget with a view to switching from a reactive to proactive stance. This was not fully covered over the weekend and will be returned to at our next meeting.

Visions and fantasies

As this was linked with a need to take a long hard look at Structure, it was felt that if we approached from the other end, taking our focus off the immediate and on to the long term, we might find common ground in our visions and goals for CBiB.

This would direct us towards the way we sought to put these into place, for instance, a way of planning and discerning for events and situations, or handling money, that was more consistent with an overall plan, or possible future mission statement!

So we brainstormed our ideas, visions and wildest fantasies (for the Network!) and adopted a process of choosing a pet theme and putting it forward for broad acceptance or more exploration. It felt good to start this as it has been an agenda item for a while.

Leaving the HG

After lunch Cliff announced his intention of leaving the HG and invited feedback from the group with a view to informing his decision and giving care and attention to the process of departure. Sadness, gratitude and recognition of Cliff's unique contribution to the HG were

expressed. We said goodbye as he left during an early tea break.

Phone number

We moved on to Agenda and made a decision (recorded in our blue book) that Suzy would purchase the use of a BT phone number for initial enquiries to CBiB that can be passed easily from one landline to another between us. This should mean a lessening of the previous burden on one person's shoulders, namely Anthony's. This will be reviewed in six months once we've had chance to see how it works.

Confluence

We talked about the recent Confluence, and how well it had turned out. Despite prior concerns, the number attending appeared to have been just right for such a new venture, and the financial disaster envisaged did not materialise, (CBiB lost just £32.12) 'Trust the Spirit' is my new motto!

Newsletter and accounts

On Sunday am we continued to look at agenda and took some time to consider Peter's desire to step down as editor of the Newsletter.

Gerri will be taking over co-ordination of the Main fund in the new year once Erica has brought it up to date at the end of the calendar year. Not a popular task and one which we have taken a long time to relieve Erica of.

Joining the HG

We heard a request from someone wishing to join the HG, while simultaneously needing to air an agenda item pertaining to how membership might be best taken up or put down. With regret and wanting to welcome this person we are asking them to bear with us while we give the subject in general more air time.

Enthusiasm

I enjoyed this meeting and especially looking at the wider and future picture, and what really captures our enthusiasm about Community Building. I hope as we move on and explore further, others will feel moved to contribute and build on it.

Dates for next meetings

- March 13th and 14th, Douai
- April 24th and 25th, Douai
- July 17th and 18th, Douai

Tein Stuttaford



Evolutionary cosmology

Dear Peter,

We are staging a series of one day seminars at Braziers along the lines of the enclosed programme. We are particularly interested to relate community formation to current developments in evolutionary cosmology (see "The life of the Cosmos" by Lee Smolin OUP 1997).

The subject will be opened up at our March seminar and we thought your readers might be interested to know of this development.

Best wishes

John Woodcote

Seminar Convenor

For details of the first seminar, and how to book see later in this newsletter - Ed.

Parents connected

Dear Peter,

I'm writing to let you know about an exciting new venture I'm involved in along side my work teaching the Alexander Technique. Its called Parents Connected and we want to create a new forum for parents to support each other.

As a parent I have a need to live each day with the inspiration that comes from exploring new ideas - by making new friends - doing new things, by creating new projects, to nurture myself, by laughing and having fun, from offering support and sharing what I have to share from having quiet times to reflect or be still, from sharing and co-operating with others to make my life and those around me more wonderful.

Some times I get stuck in a rut, and feel resentful that there are not the resources available that I need for me or my family.

I want to find ways to get these resources, with the co-operation of others it can be done. It's starting to happen more and more in my life. In July, Jeff Lewis, Catherine Joyce and I got together to create Parents Connected. We had our first event on 25 November in St. Albans

For example I want my daughter Clara, aged 8 to meet with other children who have a bi-lingual up-bringing to have an opportunity to develop her German with other young people.



We would like to create a series of events and groups to encourage self-esteem and confidence like:

- Mime and dance group with recorders and percussion
- A wood working group
- A story telling group
- A sewing and dressmaking group
- A day out in the holidays with adventure
- An invention group
- Training and personal development courses.
- A singing group
- Creating activities for the holidays
- A dads group
- Exchanging child care
- Fun events
- and more

Events like this could be created to meet our needs, or perhaps they are going on and I don't know about them so this forum will be there to exchange support and information. We plan to have a newsletter / website
<<http://www.makingconnections.com/parents.co.uk>>

All this can happen with co-operation and networking. If you know anyone who would be excited by these ideas, could you please pass on this letter and leaflet.

With best wishes

Beauchamp Bagenal

For details of Parents Connected, and how to contact them see later in this newsletter - Ed.

Sharing the skills of change

Dear friend

A wise man said, "if you want to develop your business, just let people know what you are doing."

BBI Training is a new company dedicated to developing, testing and sharing the skills required to support change.

In this diverse and dynamic world, we want to maximise the impact and value of our work, so we are taking it to as wide a range of situations as possible.

Making changes

Making Changes is a simple four-step programme, which introduces a range of skills that can be used to create the results you want.

So far Making Changes is a tool for:

- Complementary health work
- Delivering training courses
- Supporting a man with autism
- Modelling success
- Coaching business consultants
- Lone parents

Next, we intend to take it to a GP Practice, and to run a series of training courses, each of which will explore a different application.

Over the next eighteen months, we hope to establish Making Changes as a well-known and useful tool for change in a number of different contexts:

- Personal development
- Professional applications
- People with disabilities
- Management

and we hope that in all these contexts, people will come to recognise its value in helping them to improve such things as

- Relationships
- Finances
- Health & fitness
- Job satisfaction
- Sales targets
- Career success
- Well being
- Influence

We are running a number of training courses over the next few months, each with a different focus within the overall Making Changes format. Also there is an evening seminar scheduled every month, each with a different focus.

Of course, we want to fill the courses and to develop the applications of Making Changes, but there is more....

*Bill Goodyear
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The New Learning Centre

Skills for Success at School and Harmony in the Home

Director: Noël Janis-Norton, Learning and Behaviour Specialist

211 Sumatra Road, London NW6 1PF

Tel: 0171 794 03211/5328; Fax: 0171 431 8600

Calmer, Easier, Happier Parenting Workshops

Would you love your children to be more co-operative, confident & motivated?
We can show you ways of getting back in charge & developing positive strategies that really work.

Our intensive one day workshop: Stimulating, enjoyable, practical

Parenting Skills Classes

Helping families to help themselves

Learn how to deal more effectively with typical family issues, eg: discipline, parent-child conflicts, sibling squabbles, homework, etc.

Monday evenings, Thursday evenings, Saturday mornings (10 week course)

Family Sessions & Parent Sessions

More intensive and individualised version of Parenting Workshops and Parenting Classes

We address issues that are particular to your family

(By appointment)

Saturday Mornings, Half-Term and Holiday Courses

For children and teens who need to brush up on classroom survival skills: academic skills, learning strategies, positive behaviour and attitudes

Includes parenting advice and support

Time Out Programme

For children and teens who need to get back on track

A short-term educational alternative to mainstream schooling for pupils experiencing acute problems with learning, behaviour, motivation, confidence

Includes parenting advice and support

Introductory Talks

Free talks, every week, on "Skills for Success at School and Harmony in the Home"

For parents and professionals

Two London locations (call for details)

The New Universe Story

Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research Day Conference

Saturday March 27th 1999

Announcing the first of a series of day events at Braziers in each of which two or three speakers from different disciplines will consider the continuing evolution of the self-organising universe to which we all belong. They will aim in discussion to integrate their different viewpoints.

The story of creation is a natural starting-point for the series. At this first conference, in the morning, Michael Colebrook, a marine biologist active in the environmental movement, will introduce us to the subject of the new universe story. After lunch John Woodcock, a former General Secretary of the UK Teilhard de Chardin Association, will reassess Braziers' original commitment to understanding this new universe story and humanity's role in it. For interest see the quotations from Ervin Laszlo's book below.

The programme starts at 10.30 for coffee, and finishes with tea at 4.15. To book send your details to Braziers Adult College, Ipsden, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 6AN (tel 01491 680221) and mention Course No.13 "The New Universe Story". A deposit of £5.00 is required - the full cost of the day is £20.00 per person including a buffet lunch. Travel instructions will be sent with confirmation of your booking. The buffet will include a vegetarian selection.

Ervin Laszlo

From "The Whispering Pond: A Personal Guide to the Emerging Vision of Science" Introduction, pp.xix-xx: (Element Books 1996). Ervin Laszlo has written over 50 books, many of which have been translated into a variety of languages, and some 300 papers and articles. He is founder and director of the General Evolution Research Group, founder and President of the Club of Budapest, Past-President of the International Society for Systems Sciences, and Advisor to the Director of Unesco.

"The "scientific worldview" that affects most people's minds is not a happy one. In this view the essential features of the human species are the result of a succession of random, accidental events in the history of life on Earth, while the unique features of the human individual derive from the fortuitous combination of genes with which he or she was born. The ongoing struggle for survival in which every Individual, every enterprise and every society is ceaselessly engaged has made us into bundles of egotism, separate from all that lies beyond the limits of our body and the compass of our personal and professional interests.

"But this is not the view of the world warranted by the concepts and theories of contemporary empirical sciences. Beyond the accidents of mutation and natural selection in a world dominated by the random concourse of atoms and particles, leading-edge science is discovering a deeper logic. This does not mean that scientists are appealing to a transcendental mind or spirit to guide the processes that have led to the human species; rather, they are

discovering the integral dynamic of the processes that have brought human beings (and all things in the observable universe) on the scene. In the embracing vision that is now emerging, everything that has evolved in the universe - Mozart and Einstein, you and me, the greatest of galaxies and the humblest of insects - is the result of a stupendous process of open-ended yet non-random self-creation. Nothing that has ever evolved exists separately from all the rest all things are connected, all are part of an organic totality."

"At a time when we and our societies are becoming drawn into an interacting and interdependent web of technology, finance, (production) consumption, and even leisure and culture, it is vital that our consciousness be infused with this new vision, rather than with the old. We need to realise that enduring connections among humans, and between humans and nature, is an extremely important, as well as intensely meaningful concept. It is this kind of insight that could re-establish harmony and balance in a world of vulnerable interdependence and ever more chaos."

Re-evaluation Counselling

Editor's note: In a previous newsletter I asked if anyone had experiences of Co-Counselling that they would like to share. Thank you Arthur for this email.

For several years in the 1970s I was deeply involved in Re-evaluation Counselling. I came across it through the South-East Churches' Training Group: people involved in Christian adult education and training who were exploring a whole range of concepts which might counterbalance what we saw as an excessively intellectual and individualistic approach to 'education' (in an individualistic culture). We tried out 'group dynamics', transactional analysis, Gestalt therapy and co-counselling.

Harvey Jackins

The guru of Re-evaluation Counselling (RC) was (and apparently still is) Harvey Jackins, in Seattle, USA. By 1977 he and his followers had built up a network in over 20 countries. They had a publishing house, Rational Island Publishers, and a quarterly magazine, 'Present Time'. The popular introduction to Harvey Jackins' ideas was a book "The Human Side of Human Beings".

RC depended heavily on a special kind of group work to spread its practices, which featured bringing to awareness 'patterns' of feeling and behaviour arising from past 'hurt' and frustration, and the 'discharge' of those feelings which were inappropriate to the present time. It could be very rewarding, personally and in relationships. There was an awareness of some of the risks involved, and warnings were given.

Contradictions

Unfortunately, some people thought, there seemed to be contradictions in the organisation. On the one hand, the official 'Guidelines' (1977) said: "All members of the Re-evaluation Community are PEERS." But they set up a network of 'Area Reference Persons', and an 'International Reference Person', who was in theory chosen by consensus, but in practice was Harvey Jackins.

Central control

They said: "We need central communication to co-ordinate our policies and activities throughout the entire community." There were (again in theory) requirements that he should consult widely and report to a World Conference, but some people felt that all this made some people 'more equal than others'.

Teachers of RC needed the approval of local Reference Persons and of Jackins himself. Teachers could sometimes impose their personalities in controversial ways. The very words "Re-evaluation Counseling" and "Co-counseling" were 'service marks' (trademarks) of a company called Personal Counselors, Inc. This impression of central control led to some break-aways.

Break-away groups

One such was a group around John Heron at the University of Surrey. He headed a Human Potential Research Project, and published some interesting booklets in the early 1970s. I don't know where he is now.

Another group formed around Christopher Spence, who became known later for his work with AIDS sufferers. This was an explicitly Christian group, and they published an informal little magazine called "Pneumania".

I lost touch with most of my co-counselling friends. I wonder why? I still value some of my learning from that experience, and would happily do some more work like that.

When I read the page in the Newsletter I found the Jackins set-up on the Net, with no difficulty. Look at <http://www.rc.org/> On the home page I recommend: What is RC; What to Do; Support Groups; and Community. There are 14 other 'pages'.

*Arthur French
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The Quaker meeting as Community

This is the last of three talks given by Rachel Britton to a weekend gathering of Norwich & Lynn Monthly Meeting elders. All three talks were printed in Quaker Monthly during 1998, and are reprinted with permission. The second talk in the series was in Newsletter 65 October 1998.

When we consider our own spiritual lives, or the health of our meeting for worship, or the meeting as community, it seems to me that the most productive stance is to fix our eyes on what we want.

If I picture a meeting as the sort of community that at best it could be, this is not to make us feel bad, not so that we can put down our own imperfect communities, but because unless we know what we want, we are not likely to get it. We become what we love.

What a difference it makes

Community is important. We all need to belong to a community, and the more so as families become fragmented and neighbourhoods constantly shifting. I know from my own experience what a difference it makes, in coming to a new town with no previous connections, to have a Quaker meeting there to provide at once a community where one belongs.

There are people who will take an interest in my job and my grandchild. There is a group with whom to enjoy picnics and simple lunches. And there too are sure to be like-minded activists, with whom I can get involved in supporting or initiating schemes for the homeless, the unemployed, those in conflict situations, refugees.

Maintenance

In the same way that the right holding of meetings for worship is the central task of elders, the maintenance of the meeting as community is the central task of overseers. At the level of having fun together, taking an interest in each other's achievements and sorrows, visiting the sick and aged, Quakers are, in my experience, quite good.

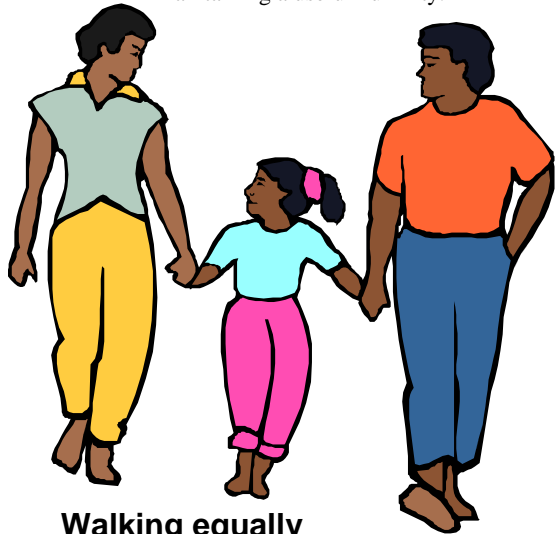
Most meetings are lucky enough to have a few sensitive and caring individuals who are good at spotting newcomers, ministering to the lonely, and remembering who needs what. These tasks are crucial, and we all need to

remember our responsibility for them, so that the few are not worn out.

Doing things together

Doing things together helps to make us a community, and being a community helps us to do things together. If all our social concern is expressed as individuals, it seems to me that the community of the meeting suffers. It is, admittedly, seriously frustrating to try to get a large and varied group of Quaker individualists to take action as a coherent whole, but let's not give up the struggle too easily.

It is also, of course, a mistake to think that Quakers have a special line on suffering, and have to do everything themselves. Working with other people and other groups is a way of developing the wider community, as well as maintaining a useful humility.



Walking equally

Overseers, and all of us in our oversight role, will be concerned with the emotional and practical needs of the small Quaker community, and with the ability of the Quaker community to act effectively in the wider world. These two, the looking inward and the

looking outward, are the two legs we have to walk on equally if we are not to go lop-sided.

But they are not all. They are not even, to me, the starting point. We start somewhere else.

For what sort of community is a Quaker meeting? It is not a combination of a social club and a campaigning group. There are plenty of social clubs, and plenty of secular campaigning groups. But we are a community of faith, a faith community, first and last, or we are nothing. Our care for each other and our care for justice spring from our faith, not the other way round.

Seeing their truth

When we look around at other members of our meeting, what we see is the person in their search for God - that in them which forms the limpid centre of their being, that which is left when their working roles, their family roles, their social personalities fall away. It is because we see their truth that our hearts go out to them.

It seems to me quite wrong to feel that we have to love people in their distractions and obsessions, their prejudices and their self-pity. We love their capacity for God. We love more, the more we focus on their godlikeness, and the less we notice anything else about them.

People are important because they are capable of God, not because they happen to walk on two legs. 'Love me as I am', we cry. Yes, but God, who loves me as I am, loves the seed of reality in me through all the pretences and defences, and will have that seed to grow. God only can truly say 'I am'. God in me is my reality, is what in truth I am.

Spiritual needs

So it seems to me that oversight has to start with the spiritual needs of members of the meeting. Their financial and social needs are

important, but their spiritual needs are more important and come first.

Have they opportunities to talk about their hopes and fears on the inward journey they each make? Do we know where we each are inwardly, as we do outwardly? Have we each access to the food we need for our current stage of inward life and development?

I fear that our Quaker culture these days makes it twenty times harder to know each other in the things of the spirit than to know each other in our health and life situations. Rosalind Priestman's study guide (available from the Quaker bookshop) asks the question 'What encouragement do you give to newcomers?'

Would it be likely that some of them turn away feeling unwelcome and that there has been no opportunity to talk in depth about matters of faith? I would think that few visitors would feel unwelcome - but very few would be given an opportunity to talk in depth about matters of faith.

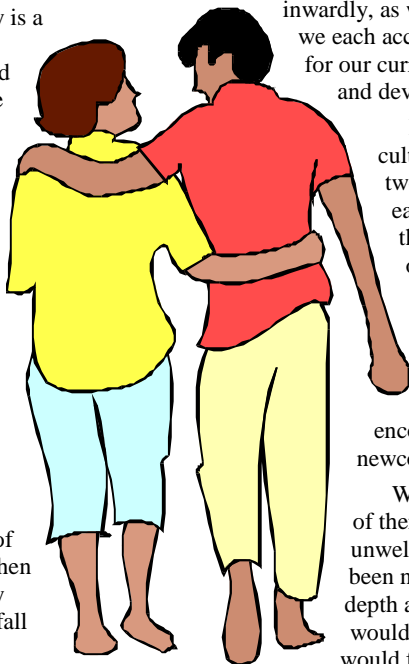
Climbing the holy mountain

Oversight is first about spiritual needs and then about the life situation as it allows or impedes the spiritual life. It is desperately hard to climb the holy mountain while in a state of chronic anxiety or loneliness or ill-health. We are responsible for making sure that no-one is crushed by circumstances where we could prevent it.

The least love

How far are we prepared to take this? Is our home open to any Friend without a roof over their heads? Is our purse open to any in need? Is sharing so matter-of-course that no-one need worry about taking what they need?

George Fox tells us to 'tender to one another in all convenient outward things, for



that is the least love'. The least love, the least of love's signs and privileges, the mark of a family.

A many-sided personality

It is also true that a growing spirit needs to be embedded in a rich and many-sided personality, as a seed needs a well-developed fruit or the embryo chick needs the nourishment of the surrounding egg. Life is not just about worship and Quaker business and social work.

We will not have healthy meetings if almost all of us spend almost all our time on these things. So oversight has to include encouraging the artist in their art, and the scientist in their researches. We must not let oversight come to mean only being alert for trouble.

How can we make the most of the wonderful singing many Friends are capable of, the knowledge of birds and flowers, the insights into social functioning? Friends are not particularly good at celebration, but that too is part of being a community.

Variety

And then, the meeting is more than the sum of its members. Paul used the analogy of a body, in describing a well-functioning church. A good meeting is one where not only each individual has a rich and many-sided life, but also the meeting as a whole contains a variety of types and backgrounds and talents, all contributing to the whole in very different ways, all necessary and all valued.

Can our meetings face differences openly? There are differences that enrich, and differences that hurt. Do we know what to do with the latter?

To quote Fox again, 'And being written all in one another's hearts, have all one voice and the pure language of truth, where in all plainness of speech things may be spoken in nakedness of heart one unto another in the eternal unity in the one spirit.' How difficult it is to keep those open channels of communication going, to speak plainly in love, and to listen from the heart. But even that is not enough.

Marriages between Zones

I don't know how many Friends read Doris Lessing - I get a lot from her science fiction. She has one story called Marriages between Zones 3, 4 and 5. In this story we meet three societies on different levels. Zone 5, the lowest, is a region of personal anarchy, ruled by the arbitrary whim of a queen who consults nothing but her own immediate impulse.

Zone 4, one step up, is an ordered society, with discipline and self-sacrifice but little freedom or warmth. Zone 3, by contrast, is a flexible, sensitive society, run on consensus and discussion, very aware of the environment and committed to relationship. It should be a paradise. It reminds me of some Quaker ideal community.

But something has gone wrong, it is dying. It turns out that it is dying because it is cut off from what is below it, and what is above it.

From what is below, because it shrinks from contact with the crude and often violent ways of Zone 4, and feels no impulse to mix some of its own fineness into that crude level. And from what is above, because it is satisfied with its own level of being, and does not even remember that there are zones above it.

Health returns only when people from the zone below are helped to climb up to and contribute to Zone 3, and some few of Zone 3 start the long difficult climb towards the hardly guessed zone above them. They have to want more than they yet have, before what they have already achieved can live.

True community

So it seems to me that a meeting which is a true community will never be too well educated, too refined, to be open to the crudities of ordinary life. At the same time, it will always have and see the need for some members who are reaching beyond the accepted norm towards what can seem like extravagant heights.

We must not try to 'outrun grace', but neither must we shut our ears to our calling because it is likely to make us appear unusual or even ridiculous to our fellows.

A cloud of witnesses

After all, early Quakers did appear pretty ridiculous to the urbane civilisation of the Restoration. They too are part of our community. A Quaker community consists not only of the people in a particular meeting at the moment, but also of the long line of Quakers who built up and maintained their traditions over three hundred years.

They are our community who speak to us still through their lives and writings. The imagination is a great thing, and glimpses aspects of truth. Sometimes in imagination I see the benches in meeting for worship with some of those whose writings I have loved and fed on - with Thomas Kelly and Isaac Penington and many a non-Quaker too.



We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. I feel that they help us with their presence, as well as their writings, in some way that is very real though not easily specified.

The empty centre

So we come back to the meeting for worship as the key symbol as well as the central act of a Quaker community. In meeting for worship, the community sits round, facing inwards, into the empty centre.

The spiritual heart of the community is the empty space, and the silence. The true community is a ring round silence. The axis of silence in the centre holds the community together and carries the power of God into it. A current flows through it as through a ring of iron in a magnetic field. Then it lives.

About Parents Connected

Parents Connected Network was formally established in July this year (we'd been talking about it for ages!) and grew out of a wish to take time out to consider how we are and how we want to be as parents. It is about parents sharing their experiences as parents, it's about learning, inspiring, finding alternative ideas to try out, and anything else that works.

Three parents who want to get a bit more of a handle on their parenting skills formed Parents Connected. We are Jeff, Beauchamp and Catherine. We got together, during a meeting we were all at. We want to join together with other parents who, like us are interested in how we parent, so that we can all benefit from our parenting roles and anticipate

the challenges and opportunities that occur with our children as they grow.

The Parents Connected Network is not about us having all the answers, we don't know it all and we don't want to do it alone. We do believe that we can all develop the skills that will help us be better parents - for our ourselves and our children's' benefit. We hope you and others you know will be encouraged to join us.

*CONTACT for more information:
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Welwyn Garden City, HERTS AL8 6XS.
Tel 01707 331391.
Email: parent@makeconx.globalnet.co.uk*

Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.

Brighton: Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Tracy on 01243 775745

Central & North London: if you are interested please contact Margaret C. Walsh on 0171 794 9158

Leamington Spa: First Wednesday of each month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is not necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

Malvern Hills: Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

Oxfordshire: Currently not open to new members. Contact Sharon on 01235 848132

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177

Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.



General Enquiries

about Community Building in Britain or events: Tel 07071 880858 (premium rate), or Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

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

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Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by 12th March 1999.

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 reproduce items in full, please realise that the editor may have to shorten or alter them for publication.