

**GETTING REAL: PEER COUNSELLING
AS A WAY TO AUTHENTICITY**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to address the question, "Is Peer Counselling a way of fostering or promoting the existential notion of authenticity?"

The intention of Peer Counselling is to improve the psychological health and well being of its participants (both counsellors and counselees) through peer intervention and education. Peer Counselling training is a curriculum and method wherein students are taught to listen to and help in the choice-making process of their peers. Peer Counselling, both training and outreach interaction, encourages the development of positive identity and responsible independence as individuals exercise more control over their experiences. It seeks to create opportunities to learn how to actively and intentionally use experiences to gain new levels of confidence and competence. A process oriented, experiential training approach, it ensures the content is relevant to the learner. The self-directed attitude and approach of peer counselling encourages counsellors and counselees alike to become active participants in their own development, in their own life choices. The acquisition of interpersonal communication skills such as empathic listening, facilitative questioning, decision making and values clarification may aid both counsellor and counsellee in a movement towards the existential notion of authenticity.

Authenticity includes such characteristics and qualities as: genuineness in 'good faith'; autonomy; discovery of one's 'core structure'; creative choice making, critical examination of societally imposed norms; radical responsibility for the conditions and perspectives of one's life; and an openness to the dynamic nature of one's unique being.

Re-constructions of peer counselling interactions provide opportunity to examine the theoretical possibilities for peer counselling to promote authenticity. Finally the implications of merging this curriculum with the philosophical notion of authenticity is examined in the light of actual classroom experience. Implications for pedagogy are discussed.

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GETTING REAL: PEER COUNSELLING AS A WAY TO AUTHENTICITY

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INTRODUCTION

The Research Questions

Is Peer Counselling a way of fostering or promoting the existential notion of authenticity? This question may be addressed through others. What is peer counselling training and what are peer counselling interactions like? What is authenticity? What aspects of authenticity are promoted through peer counselling? How might these notions be more generally understood to relate to the nature and conduct of pedagogy?

To examine our belief structures and to constantly strive to be what is in us to be is to move towards authenticity. To refuse to do so, to live in denial of our freedom of choice and our radical responsibility to create our lives according to our choices, is to hide in inauthenticity. The more consciously aware and critically evaluative we are of our attitudes, feelings, words, thoughts, beliefs and behaviors, the more creative potential we possess - the more authentic we become. Peer counselling is one doorway to authenticity.

Focus and Significance of the Study

Peer Helping, Peer Support, Peer Counselling (whatever name it goes by) is a curriculum that teaches people of all ages to help and support one another through listening and questioning. One should not be misled by the word 'counselling' or 'counsellor' - this is not a 40-hour package to establish the layperson in private practice. It is rather a beginning point in a different way to communicate with others (and I believe, ultimately with one's self). It is therefore a way to promote or foster authenticity. For these reasons I have found it to be of great value and importance to me, as a person, and for the part of my personhood I call "teacher". I am committed to helping others share in that learning.

Peer Counselling involves formalized training in the kinds of things that good friends and loved ones do rather naturally in supporting one another. One of the presuppositions that peer counselling is built on is that we most often seek out our peers for help when we experience some frustration, concern, worry or problem (Carr, 1981). The training seeks to formalize the 'skills' necessary to effectively do that. "Effectively" means that peer counselling is a process in which trained and supervised students offer listening, support and alternatives but little or no advice to other students. "Rather than being an advice-giver or a problem-solver a peer counsellor is a sensitive listener who uses communication skills to facilitate self-exploration and decision-making" (Carr, 1981).

As peer helpers undergo the training process and begin to put these principles into practice with their peers a growing sense of authenticity for both counsellor and counsellee may be gained through certain insights. As much as the individual will "allow", these insights include 1) genuineness - a rigorous honesty which shuns self deception, 2) the essential freedom and autonomy of each individual which expresses itself in creativity through choice, 3) a deepening articulation of choice originating from the 'depth structure' of self, 4) the awareness of responsibility not as a burden of guilt

or consequence but as the ability to respond with conscious integrity to any situation and finally 5) a willingness to allow the unfolding of the self.

It should be noted that when I speak of Peer Counselling I am referring both to training of counsellors and to relationship with counselees. That is, I am convinced that the notions and experience of authenticity can be introduced to teenagers through peer counselling training and the peer counselling interaction. More specifically, I am referring to: the methods, core ideas and role-play experiences of peer counselling training and to the methods, underlying ideas and dialogic interactions that peer counselees experience.

A question which posed itself as I undertook this study was, "Why do a philosophically based exploration rather than a psychological examination of peer counselling? After all peer counselling is part of a psychological educative endeavor." My reasons are three fold.

First, from an extensive review of the literature on peer counselling it appears no philosophical and phenomenological examination of this nature has been attempted. It appears that practitioners and researchers are generally receptive to peer helping advocacy but that many issues surrounding peer helping as a vehicle for the delivery of human services need to be clarified. De Rosenroll (1990) in *"Peer Helping Implementation, Maintenance and Research Issues: Implications for the Future"* identifies four categories in need of research. They are: **Global Issues** (legal, ethical); **Pre-Training Issues** (needs, objectives, selection, enlisting support); **Training Issues** (content, duration, process, trainers, evaluation); and **Post- Training Issues** (tracking, practicums, supervision, special training topics, evaluation). This thesis however, incorporates the view that there are certain benefits for counsellors and counselees alike

which are not mentioned as a form of research by De Rosenroll. What those benefits are - skill development aside - do not appear to have been examined to any significant degree. Carl Rogers, on whose theory much of peer training is based, maintains that the three requisite qualities for a therapeutic/helping relationship are authenticity, acceptance and empathy. I believe that teaching is a kind of therapeutic/helping relationship and I would add that authenticity in and of itself is an ideal worth espousing especially in the context of education for adolescents. What is meant by authenticity has not been addressed in the context of peer counselling.

The most common theme which surfaces in the literature of Peer Counselling, is the need for further research - especially in the area of "effects and effectiveness of peer counselling." I have attempted to address that lack by creating an integration of philosophical (rational) analysis and phenomenological (lived experience) vignettes. I hope this somewhat unique design represents another means by which information and perspective concerning Peer Counselling can be precipitated.

A second reason for pursuing a philosophically based orientation is that events and circumstances surrounding my own journey and process in graduate studies pulled me to this purpose. The topic and its method evolved over a period of months and became clearer through intense self examination and a dialectic questioning and listening process which I was engaged in with my advisor. The topic and methodology were my authentic response to my reactions towards Peer Counselling and my evolving teaching style.

Thirdly, the final choice to pursue a philosophically based examination rather than a psychological one was made after a great deal of deliberating, evaluating and no small measure of 'angst'. A philosophical study presented difficult and challenging concepts and required me to question again my own belief structures, meticulously define my

terms and de-jargonize my writing in order to simply and carefully build an argument. While psychology fascinates me I wanted to do more than add to my knowledge banks. I sought a more profound objective. This thesis has required me to examine myself, to change some of my belief structures, and in the process helped me confront the most pervasive malaise amongst the teenagers I work with - apathy and despair. (It may be disguised as rebellion, anger, overt pleasing and perfectionism, confusion or boredom).

The study is organized as follows: Chapter One is a narrative excursion into my own journey (both personal and professional) towards an understanding of authenticity. It is included because I believe authenticity, by its nature, is something that must ultimately be chosen, experienced, lived - not just conceptualized. Each individual encounters their authentic being uniquely. Chapter Two is a detailing of Peer Counselling. Included here is the history and rationale of the program, a literature review on peer helping in the schools, and a synopsis of the methods used in training (the "how" of this learning itself promotes authenticity and is relevant to the last chapter). Next a detailed description of the curriculum of Peer Counselling is included so that the reader may clearly conceive of the core ideas, postures and potentials that are introduced to and practiced by counsellors. Herein the reader will find the basic notions, beliefs, behaviors that teenagers are educated in which ultimately may help to foster their and their peers' authenticity. Chapter Three delineates and describes the many facets or component parts of the existential notion of authenticity. Chapter Four is a series of reflective reconstructed peer counselling scenarios and dialogues. They demonstrate how peer counselling may foster or promote various aspects of authenticity. Chapter Five examines how these concepts apply to pedagogy. This last chapter explores theoretical and practical suggestions in promoting peer counselling technique and the ideal of authenticity in teaching adolescents, examines why these notions are desired goals and outcomes for pedagogy, and what this has meant in my own teaching.

Ultimately I believe the disciplines of carefully evaluating and articulating my own beliefs about authenticity, and analyzing the value of peer counselling, will prove themselves in my classroom where what I have learned I will teach. That is, from this study I have gained a more particular use of language; considered articulation and definition of terms, a more natural, straightforward style of writing that builds on my own knowing and life experiences, and finally a deeper 'care' to draw this forth from others.

In the interest of verisimilitude and with regard for my own particular style I have taken certain liberties in the use of the language and disregarded some grammatical conventions.

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY

"You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star." Nietzsche

I set out here to describe the journey that led me to this question. 'Is peer counselling a way to foster or promote authenticity?' The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. It is a theoretical examination of the connections between peer counselling and authenticity and it is an experience of learning and writing authentically. That is, it represents my own voice. It is from my own lived experience. It is drawn from my own deepest questioning, and it is written in my most genuine style. I can look at the notion of authenticity but until I live that notion, express from and of my authentic 'knowing' it is merely "words, words, words". Therefore this introduction will be a narrative of my evolution to this point with regards to the coming together of these two notions.

I try to go back to a point where I first began to seek for conscious understanding of authenticity. Of course I didn't name it as such but the search recedes back into dim childhood. Young children live quite authentically - naively. There are so many forces which impinge upon that. From my adolescence I recall the voices of my parents: "You are an autonomous unit - that means I consider you responsible for your actions." "Don't go blaming others for what you feel hasn't gone your way - rather see what you can do about it." "Well it's up to you to decide how you're going to react. What are your alternatives?" They didn't talk to me about 'inner self', 'getting real', or 'being authentic'. Those terms and topics weren't in vogue in the '50's. But the seeds were planted.

There came a period at the end of a reasonably halcyon decade of experimentation and 'doing my own thing' (the 70's) when I found myself pretty messed up, mixed up, hopeless, helpless and full of inarticulable despair . We were a generation intent on questioning the mores, the standards, the values of the culture but not entirely sure what to replace our deposed authorities with. But surely every generation, each individual in a lifetime encounters this darkness (which Heidegger would likely call the 'angst' or 'dread' which forces one out of inauthenticity). At any rate I was compelled to make some, I suppose, rather authentic decisions. I felt an old order was passing away in my life. I clung to it. It was damn slippery. Eventually I had to surrender and let it go. And in that letting go - "I" went. A differently disposed 'I' started a new career - teaching! I moved to a small town where I knew no one. I left a lot of long term, historical relationships behind. I lived alone for the first time in my life. I struggled through an initial year of teaching independent, isolated, sometimes crushingly lonely, uncertain. I had the uncanny sensation more than once that I was standing slightly apart watching a young woman of sad intensity perform a sometimes ludicrous, sometimes hilarious melodrama. Other times I felt fierce and happy.

Four years later I'd been teaching long enough to know I was still missing something. I'd gotten a handle on the mechanics of the job - the students liked me, respected me. I knew my subject and got a nice buzz from creating new challenges for and with them. Perhaps they taught me more than I them. The staff were companionable, the community had accepted me. I just didn't feel I was contributing the thing (maybe anything?) of real and lasting value to the lives of so many of my students. The curriculum became more and more empty as I opened to what *their* lives were, what *they* were longing for. Needing. I felt abused and bruised after a lot of school days fighting a losing battle with the apathetic and despairing. Somedays I led the losing team. Beneath their bright and brittle facades of popularity, sexuality, herd mentality;

underneath the Chip'N'Pepper and the smell of 'suspicion', seemed to lie a fundamental confusion - a dismay about their worth, their purpose, their power. A pervasive and inclusive malaise that had a huge majority feeling and believing, "Why try? I can do nothing! Our desperate fate as a species condemns me to eat burgers, drink brewskies and be gratified for tomorrow we all die." Their parents have bought the good life for them, (dysfunctional as it may be) television sells the soma, and school is the place to meet friends and make enemies. They find jobs the second they turn sixteen and balance those against school work. An inflow of cash is essential to maintain the image. (Although some support themselves and other family members). The rallying cry: "Lean on your friends, they're all you really have..."

An image of myself - a gigantic Duracell (of sad intensity) with 170 pairs of booster cables attached. My charge grows feeble - theirs doesn't even register.

After a term or two of blaming others (the curriculum, the system, the society) for my growing discontent I decided to take responsibility for recharging myself. So this is what I did. I signed up for an eight-week intensive at Happiness Boot Camp. Summer camp for happy existentialists; authenticity training. But I didn't know that then. I just knew that I liked the idea of being more "loving and accepting" as advertised and this looked like more than the narcotizing fix offered by so many others. I guess the moment one half of this thesis was conceived I would attribute to that first night in camp when 42 people from all over the world gathered together and the facilitator outlined to us what he felt were six pathways to a happier, more joyful existence. They were: 1) Be authentic. 2) Let go of judgments. 3) Be fully present in the moment. 4) Live in gratitude. 5) Be your own best expert. 6) Just decide.

I certainly remember sitting there wondering "What does it mean to be authentic? How do I do that? Do I do it with my shoes on? Do I just start saying whatever I feel like saying in any given moment? Do I spontaneously combust?" The question remained unanswered. I never did ask - I suppose I wanted to be my own best expert and find my own answer. I'm still finding it. But I lived those eight weeks in the most intense self analysis I have ever experienced. This particular teaching is based on the premise that the human being is a believing animal. Our beliefs quite literally create our reality. Our society has ingrained scores of beliefs that use 'unhappiness' (guilt, shame, anger, negation) in order to motivate us to do what is considered 'good'. If beliefs can be named they can be changed. 'Happiness' (ease, assurance, forgiveness, affirmation) can motivate us much more effectively to be who we truly are and to create the best of what we want for ourselves and for others. A compilation of the truths of Christ and Buddha, of Socrates, of Sartre and Kierkegaard, of contemporary psychology and philosophy, it is not so much a tool or formula technique as an attitude and a developing process of seeing. "It is a vision for living, a powerful and effective alternative born out of the attitude *to love is to be happy with...* . This translates as a deepening and loving embrace of ourselves and those around us through a stance of non-judgmental acceptance and a release from conformity to expectations or ideals" (Kaufman, 1977, pg 10). It is an attitude of radical questioning and choice. The 'method' was a simple process of Socratic dialogue that enabled the seeker to discover her preconceptions and decide, based entirely on her own expertise and knowing, what choices she would make. Basically the experience confronted me with a radical course in personal accountability. I unearthed and released some very restricting, rather Gothic beliefs about myself. The 'boot camp' part was no joke - it was extremely confrontive. I dreamed several nights that I was attempting to run away but my luggage was too heavy to carry out the gates. I went through a crisis of healing physically which I experienced vividly in my body. I encountered the most remarkable unfettered clarity and exuberance.

I returned to a year of teaching that was equally exuberant -the most rewarding of my career so far. I stopped trying to "fix" my students and starting accepting where they were at. I asked a lot more questions. I challenged them to discover what really mattered to them - what they were most wanting for themselves and why they might sabotage themselves in that quest. I challenged them to question the beliefs of the characters we encountered in literature. Could they do that for themselves? I pushed them to write more in their own unique voices. What lay beneath their so oft repeated refrains, "But I don't want anything" "I don't know what I want" and "Is this gonna be on the exam?" One day I urged them to write out 50 things they wanted to do, to be, to see, to experience over their lifetimes. Most got stuck at twenty, some were dead ended at five. Many were so vague as to be meaningless. I urged them to challenge their beliefs about their abilities, their achievements, their goals and wishes at school, at home and with friends. *Some* of them were ready to hear it. My literature and composition classes were lively and animated - I even enjoyed *Death of a Salesman* that year. We had a lot of provocative discussion looking at Willie Loman's 'middle class' morality and beliefs. I was excited and renewed. There were so many projects I undertook that year that flourished - in and out of the classroom. As they flourished I flourished. It was like a miracle had touched my life. It wasn't a mystical, beyond the realm of believable, wowie-zowie space garbage kind of thing designed to induce belief in something greater than myself. It was a profound shift in perspective ... that induced belief in myself.

So *I* decided!! *I* chose how I was to act, react, behave. *I* created the panorama of my life. Each event (whether I perceived it as good or not so good) could be viewed as an opportunity for my development. I began to radically question my acts, my thoughts, my moods. Often the most innocuous proved to be the most insidious. I got out of the trunk and into the drivers seat. I dialogued with myself, asking myself what beliefs I was

operating from in circumstances that seemed less than what I wanted. Sometimes I even figured it out!

Then followed a year when it all seemed to desert me. Its shelf life had expired. It seemed that nobody *wanted* to be in charge of their lives, perhaps not even I. Most resented the challenge. Why be fulfilled when you can be gratified? The more bitter and defeated I felt the more bitterly defeatist and then adversarial my encounters with others. They came in battalions. I decided to take a break from "the system". I applied to live and work at the Happiness Institute (mowing lawns) and I applied to do a Masters. I was accepted at both. Here I am - was that an authentic decision?

At the back of my mind what I knew most decisively was that I wanted to crystalize, solidify, augment, resurrect somehow that state of radical aliveness I knew could be mine - was me. Could be taught. Could be learned. Could be theirs. So why didn't I go to Connecticut - where the miracles never end. Maybe I will go back to immerse myself again sometime but I had "reasons" to come back to academe. I certainly don't regret this choice in any way.

You see, six years before, I and another teacher decided to initiate a Peer Support team at our high school. We did some preliminary reading about the program, found some 'veterans' to help us through the first four sessions and we learned as we proceeded. It was fantastic. It spoke to a deep wanting in me - to communicate more effectively with others - with my family members, with my friends and colleagues, with my students. I wanted to offer this to those teenagers. I felt the program had merit, but the more we worked through the learning the more I realized I was doing this for myself first and foremost. As the training progressed I realized I could relinquish caretaking and replace that with something much more effective - care-giving. And there was this wonderful

environment created as we made our way through the sessions over the next weeks. We lost some of our separateness. We became, in some sense, reconciled. For once I was not teacher as 'Other'. I was just like them - wanting to be more real, more honest, more effective in my talk, in my choices, in my relationship with the world. My learners had deep insight and answers for me and I had *some* for them. Our differences (in age, in gender, in race, in 'status') grew more transparent, less solid. We shared some mutual dilemmas, some private griefs. Lots of knowing nods. No one was expert - yet each of was expert. We became more genuine with one another. We dropped some of our masks. It was not sentimental. It was simply honest. *This* was what I'd been missing.

I clutched that first 40 hours of training as though it were the Holy Grail. I crusaded my family. I fumbled about with it and went into the next training session more prepared - 'considered'. I felt that the curriculum of Peer Counselling was ultimately much more than a crash course in communication skills - it was about care, about acceptance, about truly being effective in relationship, about a unique listening stance, it was about *being real*. A concrete way to care for and catalyse people - by offering them full and focused attention in order that they may resolve their own dilemmas and frustrations. It was about self responsibility, choice making, drawing someones inherent 'knowing' from them. And an added bonus - I wasn't just learning this for myself and appliqueing it onto others. We were learning it together.

Throughout that summer at 'authenticity camp' I was repeatedly astonished by the similarities in the underlying philosophies of these two curriculums that had grabbed my attention so provocatively. Two different traditions perhaps but - yes - all knowledge is one. In the two years following, my Peer Counselling training had a more intentional thrust; to facilitate something richer in the trainees. Not that the training modules were altered in content really but I brought a deeper wisdom to them and a heightened sense

of wanting to draw that forth from teenagers. So much eager potential there - they are hungry for this.

I still didn't know that what I was doing was existential in nature or that a name for some of the mystique of Peer Counselling training might be authenticity. That naming - that investigation - that articulation - that making explicit my tacit knowing - has occurred here over this year.

I came to the Masters program intent on furthering my knowledge and my skills in Peer Counselling. I feel that peer helping skills and philosophy offer me a portal into the public education system by which I can be the kind of authentic teacher I want to be. It is a little like infiltration. I have done a great deal of knowledge gathering and assimilating, and virtually no skills building. But that I believe will follow quite naturally (not effortlessly) from the strengthening I have done of my deeper framework. That has evolved to a point where I can understand and name what I know - I can separate the component parts, define my terms and re-member the whole according to my own unique interpretation. Consequently I see a most magnificent unifying web building. The connections keep forming - between my own evolving philosophy and what and how I love to teach, between my own life experiences and my relationships with students, between my ever changing truth and others' truths. I realized just recently that I have been finding my own voice this year. I have been learning what it means to be true to myself. I care for and about the 'knowing' that resides within. I realize more than ever that to live authentically I have to discover that 'knowing', I have to articulate that, I have to practice that. In practicing these notions I am also defining and establishing myself as, "One whose ultimate aim is the care of its Beingness" (Heidegger). If I can do that I can help some others to do that. And that is what my students must do. Those of us who choose to learn this quite explicitly in peer counselling training do so

there (to varying degrees according to our readiness). But I can use these concepts in my English classroom - opportunities abound.

I would love to facilitate Peer Counselling training for adolescents and adults on a full time basis for three reasons. One, it's a program whose clientele choose to be there. We thus begin with a sense of openness. There is a will and a willingness to participate, to learn together. Second, the methods used are in accord with my philosophy and with how I feel people learn best. I constantly grow by practising them. Thirdly, the curriculum is "real" (as my students say). It helps to foster authentic being. It does this by modelling an existential orientation that believes a healthily authentic person is guided by three principles: self-reliance (accountability), love and creativity (Peavy, 1977). When we live and express this orientation we attend, we accept, we seek to understand, we open up options, we encourage ourselves and others to find out what really matters to us and to dare to act on that, we strip away pretenses - the truth really will set us free. We grow in respect for ourselves and for one another, we learn to suspend our own judgments, we learn to empathize - to understand how it seems for another, we open trust accounts, we explore our emotional being - we touch that, recognize that. We look at grace, we look at forgiveness, we see the power of hatred, anger, envy and abuse in our lives, we see healing and we see the unwillingness to be healed, we make our problems more bearable, we drop our phoniness. We realize how powerful we can be for one another and we become more powerful because of it.

Thus we open to our own 'guidance' - we become more receptive to the wide range of options for reality that confront us. We are empowered by a critical questioning and an active, loving mode of being-in-the-world. This is, increasingly, the framework for my teaching, my life.

CHAPTER 2

PEER COUNSELLING

"The moments of greatest creation are those of increased capacity for communication and understanding." Nietzsche

The concept of Peer Counselling is a product of our times. I believe that it is a partial response to our societies' current preoccupation with authenticity. As such, it seeks to foster through its training, skills, attitudes, and outreach the ability to make "strongly evaluated choices" which originate from within the 'knowing' self (Taylor, 1982). As well it encourages the individual to accept responsibility for their choices and to heighten their awareness of personal accountability for the situations, events and circumstances of their lives. And finally it seeks to combat the sense of powerlessness and alienation that so often characterizes the human condition of our time by building on the assumption that the most desirable result of giving assistance to others is that both parties become empowered to think and act with greater clarity, flexibility and creativity in whatever situation arises. The peer counsellor's help should be such that "it liberates the other from his or her helplessness. The other should take leave from our assistance feeling more personal freedom and more self responsibility." (Peavy, 1977, pg5)

This chapter will seek to provide, briefly, some necessary background regarding the history, rationale, literature, methodology and curriculum of Peer Counselling. Although the context for Peer Counselling in this study is high school students these notions are equally applicable to adults and younger children. The reason for this elucidation of Peer Counselling is to make clear to the reader exactly what Peer Counselling is and

what it is like so that authenticity in *its* experienced form (not just in its conceptual form) can also be made clear.

The curriculum and methods of Peer Counselling can be seen as part of a philosophy of pedagogy that seeks to empower individuals to find autonomy, and which teaches courage, conscious choice, and care. I believe these are requisite components of authenticity.

History

For 20 years, research literature has documented the growth of people helping people, particularly in schools (Varenhorst, 1984). Carroll and King (1985) referred to the growth of Peer Counselling in the United States as the "quiet revolution." In Canada, Carr noted that in 1979, there were only 10 documented Peer Counselling programs; as of 1986, there were more than 1000 and by 1990 over 3000, most of these school-based programs (Saunders, 1990). This increase in peers helping peers parallels a similar phenomenon noted in self-help literature and the paraprofessional movement of the 1960's (de Rosenroll, Dey, 1990).

Of the peer parade which now includes: Kids Helping Kids; Seniors Peer Support Teams; Partners in Encouragement; peer tutoring; peer supervision; feminist peer counseling; peer leadership; and peer support for adolescents, bartenders, hairdressers, police, bereavement counsellors, (de Rosenroll, 1990) to name but a few - one common denominator exists. At the core of each of these programs is a communication skills training package. The applications, as evidenced above, are as varied as a group's creativity and goals, but the first and final priority is to empower individuals to make self

evaluated choices, to be their own best experts and to create a sense of connectedness through communication. This kind of communication aims to

"allow an individual to come to their own best answers and solutions, through self exploration and decision making. Peer counsellors or helpers, facilitate that process through a non-judgemental listening posture which encourages others to express and explore their concerns, worries or frustrations." (Carr, 1981,4)

This concept of "counsellor" is important for two reasons. From my experience with training peer counsellors, it appears that teenagers take their role as facilitators very seriously. That is they strive not to solve problems or hand-out advice because peer counselling is not directive or coercive . The goal is to empower people to come to their *own* best solutions by accessing their authentic caring. If any situation warrants professional or adult intervention the peer will refer. Parents of adolescents may be concerned that their son or daughter is advising or being advised by another teenager in matters that they feel may require more mature consideration, parental control, or professional expertise. (For example, matters such as alcohol and drug use, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, divorce, religious affiliation, eating disorders, suicide attempts may require outside intervention.) Therefore counsellors are updated regularly on what professional services are available.

Peer Counselling is based on the fact that teenagers, like all the rest of us, tend to seek out their peers for help in dealing with the problems and decisions of everyday existence. The peer counsellor does not tell people what they should or should not do - they operate from the perspective that most individuals are capable of finding their own best solutions if given the chance to explore their options through dialogue.

Secondly this premise of counsellor as "facilitator" is important because the peer counsellor may use the training experience and new-found skills to foster *their own* self exploration; discovering what matters most to themselves, clearing away self deception and learning to make more conscious choices for themselves. They may come to act less out of obligation, habit or unthinking acceptance of trends and more from an inner source of 'care' and free personal choice. The training may promote a philosophical stance that values authenticity. This may be deepened as the peer counsellor helps others make self initiated choices.

Rationale

What rationale does research support for utilizing peer support programmes in schools?

1. Peer relationships are crucial in social development.

It is well documented that peer relationships contribute significantly to social and cognitive development and socialization particularly in childhood and adolescence. The fields of community psychology, social anthropology and sociology have contributed a huge body of research documenting the powerful effect peer interactions have on physical, cognitive and social outcomes. "To facilitate positive outcomes the nature and strengths of available peer group supports - especially the mutuality and reciprocity involved - can be protective of health and mental health as well as serving as a "buffer" for those experiencing stressful life events or situations, family addictions, depression, divorce, illness, loneliness, school transition" (Benard, 1990).

2. Peer Counselling programs give individuals the opportunity to help and thus promote personal empowerment.

People will conform to the expectations that they and others have for them in their roles. In this case the role of peer counsellor is a desirable one - ie. as a person capable of providing assistance, support, guidance to another. "The experience of being needed, valued and respected by another person produces a new view of self as a worthwhile human being with a contribution to make. In fact some studies find the 'helper' receives the most gains" (Hedin, 1987 in Benard, 1990).

3. Peer Counselling training and outreach provides the opportunity to develop important communication, collaboration and conflict resolution skills.

"No better preventionist training exists than peer counselling programs that engage youth in mutual problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution in a climate of mutual helping and respect." (Benard, 1990). This kind of experiential student-based learning helps develop intrinsic motivation because the peer counsellor attributes the locus of control to the self. "Peer Counselling training provides students with opportunities to use their knowledge in a meaningful direct way. Peer counsellors may become interested in acquiring further skills and skill mastery as they begin to see connections between how training heightens and formalizes their natural tendencies to be of help and the impact of empathy and self responsibility on helpees" (Carr, 1991).

4. Peer Counselling programs promote acceptance and respect for diversity.

Evaluations of Peer Support programs consistently identify significant increases in social interaction, acceptance, and liking between heterogeneous peers, especially between physically and/or mentally handicapped or socially withdrawn and non-handicapped peers (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Morey & Daly, 1989) and between white and non-white peers (Benard, 1990).

5. Peer Counselling programs may reduce alcohol and drug use.

Two recent meta-analyses (Tobler, 1986; Bangert-Drowns, 1988 in Benard 1990) which evaluated hundreds of prevention programs and strategies each, found that "peer programs are dramatically more effective than all the other programs in reducing alcohol and drug use among youth" (Benard, 1990). Combine this data with the number of peer-based 12-Step Recovery groups for teens and adults who have alcohol, drug, and behavioral addictions and the power of peer resources becomes more apparent.

6. Peer counsellors may be as effective or more effective than professional services in some circumstances.

"According to Naisbitt (1984) help seekers are more likely to approach their peers than to rely on professional care-givers. According to Prochasia and Norcross (1982) during the next decade self-help groups and para-professional caregivers will show more rapid growth than will their professional counterparts" (in De Rosenroll, Dey, 1990; Reissman, 1990).

7. Peer Counselling programs are cost effective.

During times of budget restraint, there are increasing demands on the remaining helping services so that more than ever, professionals are receptive to and appreciative of peer counselling components in their overall counselling strategies" (de Rosenroll, 1990; Wircenski, 1990).

8. Peer resources can promote academic achievement.

From an educational reform perspective, one compelling reason for peer support programs are the hundreds of evaluations of peer tutoring approaches that have found both positive academic and social development gains in youth (in Benard, 1990).

Literature Review

The rapid expansion of peer programs across North America has been accompanied by a wide variety of roles for peers to play in helping one another. Originally developed for secondary schools, peer helping can now be found in universities, colleges, hospitals, senior citizen agencies, elementary schools and on telephone hot lines. Peer helping programs have been developed for different ethnic and cultural groups, for health problems and health promotion, for gifted children, for teachers, the mentally retarded, inmates and many other special needs populations. Peers who provide these services often do so under different labels such as peer counsellors, peer facilitators, peer helpers, peer support workers or peer learning assistants. In other words the peer movement, like other innovations in the "paraprofessional" field (such as self help and volunteer groups) has mushroomed into diverse practices and approaches and is being written about in a variety of disciplines. A majority of what is published are *reports* of the rationale, training and practices of peers helping peers though there does exist *some* literature which establishes the theoretical and empirical bases for peer helping. This review seeks to present a brief overview of the literature on secondary and post-secondary Peer Counselling programs and to examine empirical and theoretical studies on the *effects* of Peer Counselling training and practice on counsellors and counselees.

Peer Counselling in the Schools

Gougeon (1990) offers several reasons for the growth of peer programs in schools,

" student peer counsellors help bridge the gap between adults and the peer culture, they provide an outreach approach to counselling, increasing counselling service availability and referral and they function as positive role models for other students. In addition, peer counsellor's gain a great deal themselves from their training and experiences with peers. Their self-esteem, personal awareness and communication skills all improve." (pg 120)

This growth can be attested to in a survey of Peer Counselling in California public schools (Wilson, 1986) which revealed that over 203 schools in California have peer programs involving over 4615 students as peer counsellors and more than 9000 who have

previously completed training. More than 100 student problems are addressed by peer counsellors and over 50 areas of skill and knowledge are taught to peer counselling students. As mentioned earlier de Rosenroll (1990) documents a similar growth in Canadian schools.

As peer helping programs gain in popularity some institutions are offering credit courses for the training of peer counsellors. Lynn's (1986) report on one such program at the Randallstown High School concluded that "almost without exception, graduating students rate their peer counselling training and work as one of their most valuable high school experiences." (pg 24) Another peer helping curriculum at Bayonne Public schools in New Jersey (Kealy, McDermott and Wasser, 1982) focuses on developing in students a high degree of self-respect, respect for each other, and respect for their school environment. The model introduces students to a process by asking them

1. to identify symptoms of alienation they wish to address
 2. to assess the degree to which the symptom exists within themselves
 3. to reduce the symptom within themselves and
 4. to reduce the symptom within fellow students and the school environment.
- (pg 515)

The peer helpers at Bayonne are asked to accept personal responsibility for the realities of their school experience and from there to look at ways of reforming and reshaping those realities. In this same vein peer helpers have often been used to target substance abuse in secondary schools and colleges. McKnight & McPherson, (1986) evaluated a peer intervention program in high school drinking and driving. Compared with a conventional alcohol safety program the peer program led to significant increases in self-reported intervention behavior while the conventional program failed to produce changes during the same period. Neither program led to significant measured shifts in attitudes. But Carr (1989) maintains that peers are *the* key component in *all* effective substance abuse prevention programs.

Peer counsellors have been used as leaders and facilitators in group counselling sessions. Marsico (1983) reports on a peer counseling team at Pomona Sr. High in Colorado trained to facilitate small peer groups in elective classes. The purpose was to help students find "personal meaning" in their lives and be more successful in school. The program was subjectively evaluated as meeting those objectives. Maher and Christopher (1982) discovered there were no differences in the outcomes of group counselling conducted by senior high school students compared to groups conducted by professionals.

Bowman & Myrick (1987) sought evidence that Peer Counselling programs are effective in elementary schools. Through pre and post test instruments they concluded that peer counsellors in grades 5 and 6 can be effective in improving classroom behaviors and school attitudes of second and third graders with behavior problems. The peer interactions seemed to affect positively the problem students' behaviors and attitudes toward teachers, peers and themselves as learners.

Much of the literature on Peer Counselling in the schools reports on the training given peer counsellors. Campbell (1983) suggests that training is the most critical component of peer counselling programmes and that the procedures chosen to train students can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful programme. Role playing in particular helps sensitize trainees to the value systems and feelings of others. Gilmore (1986 in Gougeon, 1990) affirmed this when he evaluated training sessions through student questionnaires. The results emphasized the importance of experiential approaches in training. Gilmore found that presentation of facts and theories in isolation should be limited. Students responded that the least useful aspect of training was, "the theory part... I forgot most of it" and, "information written on the board." But opportunities to share personal experiences and relate those to theory and ideas presented was considered most valuable. Role play activities, careful debriefing of the

role plays, small group exercises and go-rounds (in which each person has a chance to communicate) were also ranked as particularly valuable by peer counsellors.

Peer programs have also been used extensively in colleges and universities. Getz & Miles (1979) cite a trend for college students' preference for peer counsellors for areas of academic advisement, orientation, study skills, health concerns and residence problems. Frisz (1984) surveyed 200 former peer advisors but his results suggested only that peer advisement (ie. in undergraduate selection of major, selection of career and post graduate training selection) has different appeals for different types of students. Layman (1981) reviewed the literature on peer advising systems and suggests that the advantages of such programs are those echoed by Gougeon a decade later:

- 1) the economy of delivery system
- 2) accessibility to students
- 3) capitalizing on peer influence and
- 4) positive personal benefits to the peer advisor.

Layman points out the need to address questions concerning continuity, objectivity and accountability and identifies critical elements for program success such as formulation of meaningful peer counselling goals.

An offshoot of student advisement whether at the senior high, college or adult level is peer career counselling - one of the areas in which the advantages of using peers is especially noticeable. Carr's (1984) monograph (which won the 1985 Outstanding Resources award of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association) describes the use of peer career counsellors in a variety of developmental career counselling approaches, poses cautions about training peer career counsellors and gives examples of how to avoid unsuccessful work experience programs. In addition this work provides a skills training model useful for training adolescents and discusses ethical principles involved in professional and peer counsellor interaction.

Peer Counselling is also being employed effectively in residences. Crouse (1982) for instance, found significant increases in the relationship dimensions of involvement and emotional support when peer counselling was used in dormitories.

Zwibelman and Rayfield (1982) deal with an innovative programme using a campus radio station as a vehicle for providing counselling services. Another innovative programme uses campus bartenders, trained to help identify students with potential mental health problems, (Bernard, Roach, Allen and Resnick, 1981).

Peer Counselling Effectiveness and Research Issues

In 1982 Saunders wrote,

"Although the literature encourages school counsellors to implement peer counselling concepts and programmes, investigation of those concepts appears limited. Generally the research at the secondary school level has been vague and lacking in empirical sophistication, with many of the claims unsubstantiated or relying heavily on subjective evaluation" (pg 1).

He added that during the 1960's and '70's peer counselling was a relatively new intervention; research designs were weak making results questionable and/or methods used to train students were vaguely referred to, unavailable or did not follow a systematic format. In an early review of the literature Scott and Warner Jr. (1974 in Saunders, 1982) found conflicting outcomes of peer counselling. For instance they reported that Engle and Szyperski (1965) and Morgro (1973) found little difference in anxiety and self-concepts between students functioning as peer counsellors and their "clients". Also, Parker (1973) reported no difference in the concepts of self and others found among peer counselled, professionally counselled and control groups of 9th grade students. In contrast Vriend (1969), Lobitz (1970) Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) and Koch (1973) all reported highly significant changes in academic, social and personal areas of student concerns as a result of peer helping programs (in Saunders, 1982). These

kinds of conflicts and concerns still plague the empirical evidence that might point to recognizable, measurable changes in counsellors and/or counselees.

In 1984 Varenhorst suggested three research questions of paramount importance to Peer Counselling. These three questions were echoed again in 1989 by Carr, Varenhorst, Tindall, Jorgensen, Cole & Erney in *Pearls Among Peers* - a dialogue between leading researchers in the field. "Do peer counsellors significantly assist their peer counselees? Are peer counsellors who are trained by certain methods more effective in helping their peers? Are there differential problem areas more responsive to peer counselling intervention?" (Carr et al, 1989, 735). This data would be basic to an awareness of how to most effectively use peer counselling as a resource. Leading researchers consistently qualify their questions with concerns for better research designs. As de Rosenroll (1990) points out in *Peer Helping Implementation, Maintenance and Research Issues: Implications for the Future* there are inherent problems which block the gathering of empirical data "How can a researcher effectively collect data without disrupting the helping process? How can the informal helping relationships into which peer counsellors enter be monitored? Without breaching confidentiality, how can researchers gather data concerning peer counsellor's clients?" (pg 68) He goes on to give four reasons to explain the lack of adequate research. Firstly many practitioners who are developing and maintaining programs are regular classroom teachers and only have time for priority activities. Research is a low priority activity in that context. Secondly, research projects are often seen as invasions of human rights or just plain irrelevant by many practitioners or administrators. A third reason is that many coordinators have only basic research and evaluation skills. They may be eager to contribute to the research but simply don't know how. Finally the fourth reason focuses on the third - that research methodologies for this type of research need to be borrowed from other research fields: anthropology, curriculum studies in education, and life span development in psychology. To date there is no

organized tool which would provide a sampling of effective research methodologies for practitioners to gather data in their schools and community organizations (pg 89).

Only a very few researchers have reported on their investigations of Peer Counselling as an agent of change in counsellors and counselees. Grady (1980) indicated that school climate improved and peer counsellors and their clients reported higher self-esteem as well as stronger school spirit and commitment. Data was collected using several approaches.

A number of studies have found that when adolescents experience worries, frustrations or dilemmas they are more likely to discuss them with their peers than with parents, or other adults (Carr, 1984). In a large self disclosure survey of high school students, Sparks (1977) found students indicated that they disclose significantly more about low risk topics than with personal topics, disclose most to their same sex friend and disclose least to their school counsellor.

Henriksen (1991) evaluated the effects on peer helpers at Central Middle School using pre and post tests, questionnaires to parents and teachers and anecdotal records from peer counsellors as well as a control group. Scores on the Questionnaire for Helpful Responses increased significantly from pre to post test for peer helpers. A significant difference in a positive direction was found for the Peer Helper Questionnaire while statistical analysis of the Piers-Harris Self-Esteem Inventory showed no significant difference between the training and comparison group. This may be accounted for by the awareness raised by Saunders in 1982 that "attempts to measure self-esteem after short-term training programs in interpersonal skills may actually measure changes in self-awareness and that changes in self-esteem may occur over a longer period of time as skills are applied and confidence grows" (pg 22). It is possible that peer helpers become more self aware and are therefore more self critical than students in a comparison group.

The peer helpers' self evaluation in Henriksen's study provided positive information. Eighty-two percent said the training helped them "know themselves better" and 91% believed the skills learned would benefit them "throughout their lives." Seventy-three percent said the training had given them more confidence in decision making. Most of the helpers expressed a strong desire for more opportunities to do "counselling type" work. About 230 students took Hendriksen's student/school survey. Within two months of the start-up 13% already had talked with a peer counsellor. Of these 65% found it "helpful" 32% rated it "satisfactory" and 1 found it "not helpful." Fifty-six percent of the school population knew how to contact a peer counsellor, about half said they would see a peer counsellor about a problem and 41% said they would recommend it to a friend.

McDowell (1982) studied adolescent perceptions of peer counsellor effectiveness in simulated interviews. The subjects were 143 grade eleven students. The effects of the two factors (trained vs. untrained) and the role label assigned (friend vs. peer counsellor) were tested using an experimental design. Results indicated adolescents perceive trained peer helpers as more facilitative than untrained helpers. She found that peers acting as friends tend to give more advice while peers acting as counsellors tend to give more reflections. It is the peer's *style of communication* that adolescents perceive as effective.

The research suggests that peer programs have been successful in reducing school-related problems such as absenteeism, drop out rates and vandalism (Johnson, 1978, Carr, 1990) and in helping students deal with contemporary adolescent problems such as loneliness, dating, sexuality, family, friendships and work (Carr, McDowell & McKee, 1982; Varenhorst, 1984). Reardon's doctoral investigation (1990) revealed that when high school peer helpers were matched for a number of informal sessions with students who had failed two or more courses, the failing students' grades improved and they were less likely to drop out of school (in Carr, 1991). Another recent study conducted by

Poisson & Russel (1990) found that peer counsellors in a university peer advising program scored close to significantly higher on a Positive University Experience Questionnaire than the controls. However no significant differences were found between the groups regarding perceived stress and level of self esteem.

Benaïd (1990) and Carr (1985, 1988) have argued persuasively for the importance of peers in virtually all adolescent growth and development. Carr (1991) notes that the current uses of adolescent peer counselling in a school include prevention and reduction of substance abuse, sexuality and health education, resolution of personal dilemmas, suicide intervention, and career exploration. He suggests that peer counsellors have also played significant roles as: mentors to younger or elementary students, tutors, transition agents for students new to a country, school, or grade level, or those experiencing a traumatic event. He advocates especially for peer helpers in the role of "dilemma manager". In this role the peer helper assists in sorting out a problem, brainstorming the options available and examining the possible consequences. Peer helpers do not resolve the problem but provide opportunity for students to fully explore the dilemma without worry of evaluation, judgement, coercion or intimidation. "In this way students have a better chance of making the best use of resources, making the best decision under the circumstances and possibly developing a plan of action not previously considered" (pg. 1).

There is nothing in the peer counselling literature that addresses the notion of authenticity directly, though work by Kaplan (1978) alludes to increased self awareness on the part of counsellors in particular which may be significantly related to genuineness, lack of self deception, and personal accountability.

"As psychological education an effective peer counselling program provides a variety of conditions under which adolescents may successfully complete the transition to responsible and satisfying adulthood. Adolescents receive guidance in defining themselves, develop conscious awareness of conflicting demands, receive training and practice in responsible behavior, set and obtain realistic and desirable goals, assume responsibility for their own behavior and live constructively with the consequences, and develop security about their ability to handle new problems." (AB)

Kaplan's paper examines both training and application of skills and views the psychological and maturational growth of high school students in one observed Peer Counselling program.

Varenhorst (1984) and others mentioned in this review note increased self esteem in peer counsellors which may be derived from a clearer understanding of their own caring and from increased decision making abilities as supported by Benard (1990) and Carr (1984). Finally the willingness and the skill (as emphasized in the training curriculum) to aid others in making their own best choices may be the beginnings of the strongly evaluated choice of radical responsibility which extends outwards beyond the self.

In 1984 Barkley, Wilborn and Towers drew connections between peer counselling and the Adlerian concept of social interest. Adler's social interest is defined as "an interest in the interest of others" (pg 140). He maintained that social interest is an innate potential not an inborn quality. This study was designed to investigate the effects if any, of the experience of peer counselling training on the development of social interest of senior high students. The results suggest that the mental health of adolescents might be positively impacted by helping them to help themselves by helping others. This action-oriented approach to therapy is consistent with Adler's view that sooner or later an individual must do something in order to precipitate growth, and it could well be that getting involved with others in a helping relationship is one of the most powerful forms of therapy.

Conclusions

Though there is still a paucity of sound empirical evidence to address the particular effects of peer counselling training and experience on counselees or counsellors, the large and ever growing body of literature *about* peer counselling - itself suggests that this training and its outreach are major forces in the delivery of helping services. In the

thirty years since the first programs appeared in schools, Peer Counselling training has become much more standardized across North America. Current program manuals are markedly similar in length, content and objective. These standardized programs are now being disseminated in schools and universities in Europe, Great Britain and Hong Kong according to *The Peer Counsellor* (Spring 1990). The training for trainers has become more formalized as evidenced by the initiation of the *National Registry of Peer Counsellor Trainers*, which upholds a demanding certification process established through Peer Resources in Victoria B.C., 1988. This also ensures more consistent skill level development and counselling performance.

A second conclusion attests to the potential for Peer Counselling. Scores of programs have been initiated to address special needs.

Finally, since the '70's the growing body of research developed in conjunction with the proliferation of Peer Counselling programs has called for better research design and more evaluation of programs. This has now begun to be addressed. In articles since 1985 for example, empirical study designs have typically been triangulated, most often using pre and post tests, questionnaires and anecdotal or interview findings. Attempts to address directly and more concisely the most common research concerns help to substantiate and uphold peer counselling as valid psychology education; an effective counselling intervention by non-professionals; and a significantly facilitative part of healthy child and adolescent development.

Peer Counselling Process and Product

In this section I wish to examine more closely what the benefits are for peer counsellors in training and what peer counsellors can offer to their peers as a result of training.

Adolescent psychologist and director of Peer Resources, University of Victoria, Dr. Rey Carr says:

"Peer counselling is a deliberate and systematic form of psychological education. It enables students to have the skills to implement their powerfully experienced valuing of autonomy and control, ... and it contributes to the most powerfully experienced need of adolescence: respect" (1981, pg. 4).

Adolescence has been described as a time of identity seeking defined by Erikson as, "securing identity" and "avoiding identity diffusion". This is true but it is manifested as less of a time when one *finds* oneself and more of a time when one *makes* oneself. In my experience it is the daily interaction and experience (or lack of) with fellow students (and others) which shape a teenager's self perception more dramatically than self reflection or intelligence. According to Carr, adolescents have four overriding needs. Competency (to be strong), intelligence (not academic but to know the score, to not get conned), responsible role-taking (to be respected), and self esteem (to be valued and understood). These needs are reflected in their best shot put-downs "suck, nerd, wus, retard, baby", and their best compliments "cool, ace, radical, got-it-together. "

"While adults often react to the acting out of these needs by patronizing, scorning or disrespecting, students themselves are intensely sensitive to these needs and seek out others who share similar experiences. They look for peers who share experienced needs and who listen, not to approve or disapprove; but to accept and understand." (Carr, 1981,6)

The peer counsellor is trained to provide a non-judgemental listening posture which encourages others to express and explore their concerns, worries or frustrations. They are someone who listens or has 'been there' and can empathize. So in formalizing these skills and adding a deeper perspective to their repertoire of behaviors and beliefs

teenagers "attempt to combat the depersonalization of the technologic age" (Carroll & King, 1985) They act as high touch tutors in a high tech society.

Purpose and Content

De Rosenroll maintains that "Peer helper training has two purposes: **communication skills acquisition and self-awareness promotion**"(1990.) (I would posit that both purposes serve a larger goal - the recognition of and responsibility to authenticity.)

The communication skills are explained in sequence and in depth later in this chapter. But basically training sessions are given in the following areas: 1) attending skills (verbal and nonverbal) 2) awareness of 'roadblocks' to communication 3) good listening skills (focus on empathic listening) 4) methods of establishing non-threatening situations 5) ways of responding including feedback and confrontation 6) self disclosure ('you' and I' messages) 7) introduction to the concept of values 8) understanding of ethics, confidentiality and referral 9) problem solving and decision making skills 10) information on community resources.

Self awareness promotion is also detailed in the section on curative factors towards the end of this chapter but in general it is fostered interactively as trainees experience and experiment with the training modules. Students enhance their own psychological development through generating and acting out role plays and then discussing and synthesizing in small and large groups. After a brief lecturette and some experiential practice they "debrief" The debriefing follows a 'looking in' and 'looking out' format; in which students reflect on how they might express the skill and how others might react. They share reactions to trying the skill and what they have learned about themselves and others. Lastly, as they practice, they learn how they can teach others to do what they now do to initiate and sustain relationships and resolve problems more effectively. This occurs as a natural extension of listening and examining what really matters to

another, and what really motivates another to believe, to feel, to act. In this way the peer counselling relationship is a mutually interactive teaching learning situation. Trainees learn from the trainer and they learn from each other. They continue to learn as they help others.

Methodology and Curriculum of Training

In a survey of twenty different peer helping programs, Varenhorst (1984) reported that all twenty programs used some techniques whereby trainees learned through experience. "The most popular techniques were the kind that allowed students to be active participants in the learning process: learning-by-doing, hands-on experience, brainstorming, role-playing and active dialogues and discussion." (pg. 41) This experiential learning process has its roots in the work of Dewey and has been more recently advocated by Hunt (1987) and Abbey, Hunt and Weiser (1985) based on Kolb's work.

Training

Peer counselling training is a three-part process. The basic skills training (detailed in Appendix I) requires an initial 35-40 hours. The first stage, **training**, uses a combination of didactic and experiential methods with the major emphasis on acquiring empathic listening skills. The second phase is a series of activities that resemble supervised **practicum**. The practica are assessed and determined by the team members based on perceived needs within the organization, group goals and individual talents (See Appendix III for examples). In the third phase peer helpers begin practicing their skills. During that time, workshops are held to provide feedback, support, problem solving and **synthesis** of experiences (Carr & Saunders 1980).

Each session of Phase I Training (see Appendix II) begins with **continuity**, where old business is discussed, concerns expressed, opportunities for caring and sharing with others given, and homework discussed. Then follows **awareness** where a description is given of the essential idea in the lesson; the rationale and purpose briefly stated; students make a self-calibration declaring their need or frame of reference to the topic. Then **know-how** is emphasized, where a demonstration, a lecturette, a role play or modelling is engaged followed by simulations in pairs or trios in an **experiential** response. **Processing** takes place in a return to the large group. This seeks **synthesis** and **application**. It is commonly referred to as "debriefing". Debriefing has special significance in this training. It stems from a belief that the learning is not *in* the experience itself, but in how we think about, feel towards, reflect on and assign meaning to the experience after we have it or while it is occurring. Therefore to debrief means a re-membering of the experience brought about by a) describing what happened b) reflecting on the meaning it has personally (both in thought and feeling) c) assessing what each individual learned (about themselves or about the concept) through the experience and concluding with d) the development of a specific personal action plan where each individual could put this knowledge into practice (with family, friends, peers etc.). The session concludes with a **practice** assignment (Carr, 1981). There are sixteen sessions, one to three hours each.

Perhaps an example will illustrate this process. A 17 year old peer counsellor, who I will call Nell, engages in this method in the following way. As the group convenes for Session 3 she shares the following in continuity:

N. I've been thinking about last week's stuff on confidentiality and secrets. I'm pretty good at my friend's secrets but it occurred to me that I don't very often respect my little brother's confidences. It's like he has less power than me and I'm casual

with that. I can see that he doesn't trust me much to hold some things private - I use it to tease or bug him. So anyway I talked to him about that. I don't think he believes me yet but I plan to prove to him that I can be trusted.

Facilitator. That sounds good. Let me ask you a question, "Why do you want to prove to him that you can be trusted with his secrets?"

N. Well I guess cause I'd like to be someone he could look up to and come to as he gets older. Just to talk and stuff like that.

F. Good luck with it - it should pay off for both of you.

Others share, then Session 3 is introduced: "Non verbal attending". Nell makes a self-calibration aloud:

N. Once in awhile I catch myself thinking about my boyfriend and snapping gum while my mom is trying to talk to me and I know it makes her mad. In fact I know it makes me mad when she asks me how my day was and then proceeds to do fifteen other things while I'm trying to tell her. Pretty soon I just say "O.K." and leave it at that. I doubt if she's very interested.

The group moves into practice by pairing, a 'listener' and a 'speaker'. The listeners are secretly cued to engage in all manner of distracting behaviors while the speakers attempt to describe to their partner a decision they are currently trying to make (5 min.). Then the pairs are reversed and the listeners are cued to engage in F.E.L.O.R. (Face the speaker, maintain Eye contact, have an Open posture, Lean slightly towards them and stay Relaxed.) Reconvened in the large group debriefing Nell describes her experience:

N. I was the speaker while Tina sort of tuned in to me. Well I was talking about something that was important - at least to me - and she was looking over at Jim and then flicking her hair back and once she yawned! and then her gaze kinda wandered across my face and I felt really like I was boring - boring to her and maybe just a boring person period. I guess like you said last time, that's how beliefs are formed. If that happened very often I'd start to believe I wasn't worth listening to or at least that Tina didn't care about me. Anyway when it was my turn to use FELOR I found I was relaxed because I was just turning all the other stimuli off and focusing on Tina. It didn't matter so much that she didn't have much eye contact with me I could still devote my focus to her. Boy did I ever notice a lot! Like maybe there's a deeper issue at stake behind the surface of her decision but she's not free to look at it yet. We're gonna talk more after this.

To conclude, a practice of at least one FELOR conversation per day over the next week is assigned, to be reported and discussed next session.

Practica

Once the core skills of training have been reasonably mastered Phase II **practica** must be implemented. This may be the most difficult and problematic component of peer resource training because practica require commitment - commitment to theory and practice which involve: effort over time, continued self-reflection, a willingness to be vulnerable and to learn from mistakes. Practica are illustrated in Appendix III. Depending on the perceived needs of the school and the counsellors' own propensities, the practica may involve working with younger children in a Peer Support program, doing school outreach activities, engaging in crisis intervention or conflict resolution, focusing on peer career counselling or peer tutoring.

Inservice

The third phase of a peer resource training initiative involves **development** or refresher work. Special interest topics relating to the peer program may include for example: drug and alcohol information; 12-Step program information; dysfunctional family system; eating disorders; counselling interventions; conflict resolution; and crisis line services; to name a few which adolescents often request. Team members may wish further practice in areas which present challenges like: handling silence, initiating a dialogue, dealing with conflicts. The trainees assess their own needs and delegate the responsibilities of contact, facilitation and synthesis. For example the team may choose to invite an addictions counsellor in to speak or consult with a professional mediator about handling confrontations.

Curriculum

The content or curriculum of the training is remarkably similar in a cross section of training manuals used across North America (Varenhorst, 1970; Carr & Saunders, 1980, Golin & Safferston, 1978; Gray & Tindall 1972; Samuels & Samuels 1969; in Carr, 1981). The Peer Counselling Project in Canada (Victoria, B.C.) uses the Carr & Saunders *Peer Counselling Starter Kit* (1980). This is the training model and materials I have found to be the most age appropriate and challenging in my work with teenagers. It is also easily transferred to adult training.

Session One includes an introduction to the concept of peer counselling, its definition and purposes, an orientation to the format of the training and getting acquainted exercises. Part of my introductory remarks typically include the following:

"Now that you are all familiar with the concept and rationale of peer support I want to share with you what I think are the goals of this training. The Peer Support Team training offers a unique opportunity for each of us. It is an experience that

by its nature is dedicated to enriching our individual lives. It does this by teaching us how to communicate in clear, facilitative ways and it enables us to make what I call an 'intelligent response' to life situations. This has little or nothing to do with IQ or levels of education. This response is composed of a blend of 1) positive emotion (freed from negative feelings such as humiliation, inadequacy, fear etc.) 2) rational thinking and 3) clear values or goals. To the extent that we "feel good" about ourselves and our life situation, can think clearly and know our options, and can decide what we value in life, then to that extent we are in a good position to react to most life situations flexibly and creatively. We are creators. For better or for worse we create our own lives, including our successes and our miseries. We always have the freedom to choose how we will respond to circumstances even though some circumstances may seem so oppressive as to leave us no freedom. Peer counselling is based on this assumption and another one. The truth will set you free - so seek to understand yourself with rigorous honesty. Finally, through speaking and listening, through silence and non-verbal elements, we are able to "talk things over". When we hone those skills and use those abilities in an attentive and non-manipulative way we can help one another to overcome a great many of the personal obstacles in everyday existence and to make a more authentic, caring response to our lives."

Session Two helps students become more sensitive to the specific characteristics of confidentiality, trust and disclosure in a 'helping relationship'. One exercise, for example, "Think of a Secret" opens the way for discussion on the nature of secrets, their power in human psyches, the boundaries of disclosure, and the responsibilities of confidentiality. Another key concept of this session is that in the course of the exercise students rarely volunteer the opinion that an *expert, professional, certified counsellor, or member of same race, age or sex*, is required for them to seek support with a difficulty (at least not initially). This has significant implications for the peer facilitator. First it underlines the fact that few of us first seek out professional help for support, guidance, or encouragement during stressful periods - we most often tend to seek out friends and loved ones with whom we can safely 'talk it over'. Secondly it emphasizes the perspective

that each individual can and may be helped to view themselves as their 'own best expert' when making life choices - this is the seat of authentic choosing.

Session Three focuses on non-verbal attending behaviors. Our intention and attention is mirrored in our bodies whether we are conscious of it or not. This session brings to active awareness the physical postures which communicate open, fully focused listening and caring.

Session Four addresses verbal non-attending behaviors, that is, 'roadblocks to communication'. Roadblocks are ineffective ways of responding to another person. They block the communication process rather than facilitate it. They can cause the other person to feel judged, blamed or rejected. They prompt defensive reactions or overly dependent ones. Ultimately, failed communication elicits feelings of mistrust, unworthiness, frustration or rage. This exercise is valuable because it brings to conscious awareness the learner's own 'preferred' methods of blocking, helps them to identify the blocks that commonly occur in their intimate relationships and to understand the common reactions to roadblocks more compassionately.

Sessions Five Six and Seven introduce the concepts of empathic listening and empathic responding. Empathy is the ability to understand another person's ideas and feelings from their perspective. It is gained through a deep, subjective listening, and understanding. A person who is skillful with empathy is able to stand in the shoes of the other and show them that they are understood. Empathy seeks to *comprehend* (not project, not interpret, not judge). It is different from sympathy in that sympathy seeks to console, or reassure. Empathy includes a willingness to understand, an ability to pay undistracted attention and an ability to restrain from inserting one's own opinions, biases etc. into what the other is trying to express.

In the first exercises students have the opportunity to experience fully-focused listening both as receiver and giver. Learners talk about a decision they are trying to make with a partner. The peer helper simply listens. At the end of 5 or 10 minutes the listener responds with, "The one most important thing I heard you say was..." With very few exceptions this proves to be a most delicious experience and the discussion ensuing typically animates itself. "What a gift!" "I felt so important - as though what I was thinking, feeling, saying was, for those few minutes truly worthwhile." "Now that felt good!" "I think I could solve all my problems if someone would listen to me like that all the time." "I'd *pay* for that."

The practice is further broken down as follows. First, learners practice 'recognizing feelings and content' in non-verbal and verbal cues. (What am I communicating when I sit with shoulders hunched and eyes downcast? What am I communicating when I say "I don't know" What am I communicating when I sigh...) We begin to see that our *perceptions* about the messages others are sending tend to be as individualistic as we are. This presents an opportunity to emphasize that the "helper" need always first suspend personal judgement and "check" perceptions by asking. "What do you mean?" "What are you feeling?" Not only does this keep the listener on track but enables the speaker to clarify by articulating their own feelings and range of response. This is an important and necessary step in coming to a truly authentic choice for oneself.

Next, learners are placed in scenarios where they are asked to listen empathically to views and opinions which they may disagree with. Someone in small group is asked to speak on abortion or penalties for drunk driving for example. This offers opportunity to discuss the suspended judgement attitude required for effective listening.

Next, students are given an empathic response formula:

"You feel ____ (feeling) ____ because ____ (content) ____."

They begin to learn to paraphrase, that is to mirror back a summary form of the content and feelings of the speaker's words. They practice in a variety of situations until they have achieved some degree of mastery.

Lastly, they are given opportunity to shift to a more natural style of responding empathically. Herein they must demonstrate they can identify the feelings, identify the content and respond to both by letting the other know they have truly heard. In a way it is a process of learning to become a mirror. With time and practice the empathic listener mirrors back to the speaker a more and more exact reflection.

Nell practices her empathic listening in this dialogue:

F. My dad is the biggest jerk of all time. Always carping at me for something.

N. It sounds like your dad is on your back all the time. That must be really frustrating.

F. Yeah - I dread going home at night so I usually stay out as late as I can. But he yells at my mom then.

N. So you're not only turned off and avoiding your dad but you find your mom is involved in a way too.

F. Well if it wasn't for him I'd be glad to spend time with her and my sisters.

N. So you'd feel OK about being at home at night if you could somehow deal with your dad.

F. Yeah exactly.

etc....

Empathic skills practice carries students through a number of sessions.

Session Eight then moves to the role of questions in a helping relationship. This includes an examination of "open" and "closed" questions - that is, those questions that serve to open the other and those that serve to close communication. Once 'facilitative' questions become routine, students learn to turn some questions into statements to reduce the help seeker's sense of interrogation. Closed questions are directive, imply some sort of judgement or elicit a one word answer. . "Are you still beating your wife?" or "Why on earth would you do that?" Open questions help or enable the speaker to unfold in self discovery. "Can you tell me more about...?" "How would you like things to be?" "What's most important to you?" Of course the tone and delivery of any question is the key to successful query. Is it an interrogation or an interaction?

Session Nine deals with self-disclosure and the difference between blaming "you" messages and responsibility accepting "I" messages. The issue of "responsibility" is pinpointed here. An "I" message is a simple way of taking responsibility for our own feelings, thoughts and needs and letting others know before things blow-up. An "I" message discloses and expresses the self and can block the tendency to project blame onto another for one's own feelings of guilt, shame or need. Finally, the "I" message is self-assertive. "I feel _____ when _____ and I'd like _____. "I feel pretty resentful when you slam your door. I'd like you to treat me with the respect I show you."

"I feel so proud and tall when you acknowledge me when your friends are around."

Students are given opportunities to practice assertive communication and to understand the other two modes (passive and aggressive).

In practice, Nell and another volunteer to role-play a scenario wherein she must demonstrate a passive, an aggressive and a self-responsible assertive response. She has received a failing grade in a subject. She feels the teacher is at fault for not spending enough time on difficult concepts and not being approachable. She goes to the teacher only because he asks her to stay to discuss the grade. The role play is impromptu and done in 'fishbowl' - with the other members encircling the players. After each scene discussion ensues about the interaction. Do members relate to this style of communicating? What does each accomplish? What does each create? Nell returns to the scene with members' suggestions. Depending on the teacher's responses to Nell (in the play) the conversation *may* become a valuable opportunity for Nell to discover her reasons for failure and come to a decision about how and why she might succeed. But that eventuality can't be delegated solely to the teacher - what if he doesn't respond in such a facilitative way to Nell's accusations? Nell can arrive at a realization of personal accountability and choose a course of action based on her wanting if she approaches the scenario with a perspective of self responsibility.

N. I don't feel too good about this mark. I wonder what we can do to change it? I have a hard time understanding your explanations sometimes and feel hopeless about changing that so I don't try. Besides I hate physics - when will I ever use this?

The emphasis here is on Nell's accountability for her circumstance and her will and willingness to make choices for herself. She must accurately assess her feelings and conflicts first then discover her options.

Session Ten presents positive and negative feedback. As the learning progresses it eventually moves the student to an understanding that, when mastered, the "art" of feedback no longer can be described as positive or negative but only as effective. Effective feedback enhances communication, brings understanding, births cooperation. Effective feedback enables and empowers. When feedback is used to manipulate, control or suppress then its function is fear. Students are given many situations and scenarios in which to practice giving and receiving "feedback" and they most often find this offers them many opportunities to understand what sorts of messages trigger their own defensive reactions. For example they will give feedback to a partner using this formula "I am (think, feel, act)_when you ____because _____ , in the following kinds of situations: a friend who has stood them up for a date, a parent who has just grounded them, a family member who praises them, an acquaintance who makes casually insulting remarks about them. Debriefing often centers around the "flavor" of feedback, whether it is kind, cruel, nurturant, straightforward or harsh - in other words this session offers opportunity to examine the nuances of 'honesty'.

Session Eleven takes learners much deeper into their own selves. This session is titled "Values Clarification" and seeks to make students more precisely aware of how their preconceptions, beliefs, and values affect their present and their future "reality". Emotional feelings are interwoven with values and most of us are certainly not immune to value conflict. We are valuing creatures and what we value in life we move toward. The merit of this brief glimpse into an 'existential reality' is in its potential to help students become more aware of their essential freedom for choice making and the potential for authenticity inherent therein.

Learners are introduced to this notion with a preamble something like this, "We are, each one of us, constantly, everyday, making decisions, creating opinions and taking

actions which determine our reality. Everything we do, every decision we make, every choice we take, is based on our consciously or unconsciously held beliefs, attitudes and values. At every turn we are faced with choice. Our choices are made on the basis of the beliefs we hold, but frequently we are not clear about our own beliefs, do not even know or admit to our deepest beliefs. We discover often that the deep beliefs which motivate our thoughts and actions are really those which others have given us, taught us, reinforced in us, forced upon us; not those which we naively assume we have freely chosen. We do however have the freedom and the power to change our beliefs and thus the actions which stem from them."

A variety of simulation exercises such as the "Fallout Shelter" or the "Life Support System" (Carr & Saunders, 1981) then help to reinforce this notion.

Session Twelve builds on this by providing learners with a decision-making/problem solving model. Throughout the training students have been deepening their awareness of life as a constant series of choices. In order to help learners themselves approach their lives in a more thoughtful way session twelve provides a simple 5-step formula for making well-informed and self-initiated decisions. The more students practice this model the better able they will be to assist others with decisions. Students are reminded that they may provide assistance - but each individual is responsible for making their own choices and solving their own problems. The model is as follows:

- Identify the central issue or problem
- Explore the issue and all the alternatives, options, and possible consequences.
- Choose a next step
- Act upon your choice
- Evaluate the results

Nell chooses a significant issue for her.

PC. How can I help you Nell?

N. Well I'm trying to make some decisions about what I'm going to do after grade 12. I'm either going to go into psychology and teach that or practice that, or I'm going to go to Arts college and study drama. I know those two things are what I have talent and skill and deep interest in. I know that my marks are good and I won't have trouble with the studies and I know that those are the two things that I most love.

PC. Sounds like you've already done a great deal of work on this - that's good. So what would be your reasons for and against each choice? Lets take psychology first.

N. Well that's sorta where my head is at. I like the notion of making a contribution, helping others. I find it fascinating too. I've always been naturally pretty good at this stuff and my teachers have been encouraging me to go in this direction. I worry about having to deal with people's pain and problems all the time - it might get to overwhelm me and besides do I want to sacrifice myself to others that much? Sometimes it just seems like a lot of hard work to get there and then a lot of heavy reality to deal with. Other times though, its really appealing and challenging.

PC. How about your thoughts on dramatic arts?

N. That's where my heart is. I'm in love with theatre. My director for the high school plays thinks I have real potential and he's helping me prepare my audition material and I just love, love, love to act, to sing, dance, be on stage, perform. That really excites me.

PC. So it sounds like drama is a more exciting option for you right now. What might be the drawbacks?

N. It's a gamble ya know - whether I'll be one of the few who actually makes it big as an actress - who goes on. It's sometimes catty and conniving that world and very competitive and I don't think I'm like that. The school is an excellent one though and if I actually make auditions it would almost be a miracle - I'd have to accept!

PC. So you believe the honor of being accepted would be such to compel you to attend no matter what?

N. Well I don't know - thats not a very good reason I guess.

PC. Why do you say its not a good reason?

etc.

PC. Any other reasons for or against the drama decision?

N. Hmmm, if I don't 'make it' as an actress it'd be two years wasted - or at least two years when I could have been doing my Bachelors degree.

PC. What do you mean when you say they would be wasted years?

etc.

PC. So Nell, having examined the pros and cons can we list here on paper your various options as you see them?

etc.

PC. What do you feel your next step is?

N. I want to continue getting information on both programs, do the auditions and get admission to University. Maybe I could talk with people in each field to see how they perceive their careers.

PC. Who might you see - shall we make appointments with them now? Would you like to get together again in a couple weeks and look at it again?

Session Thirteen deals with Closure, Referral and the development of a Code of Ethics. Learners are presented with a professional ethical handbook and from there develop their own Code of Ethics with regard to issues of confidentiality, and referral. This last session provides opportunities to examine the tendency of 'care-givers' to become 'care-takers' and the peer counsellor's responsibility to her or himself. In other words, the Code of Ethics must include how the counsellor will best 'care' for *themselves*.

Mystique

That, briefly, is the curriculum, those are the skills. But cumulatively there is *another* aspect of change which occurs during and as a result of peer counselling training.

"Trainees report a mystique of experience that transcends the factual knowledge transmitted in the learning process; "helpers" describe unexpected rewards in

personal growth as a result of the skills developed in peer helper training programs" (Carroll & King, 1985, 31).

Some of the aspects of that mystique may be considered as follows. Peer helpers enter a training program optimistic, with high expectations and a lot of enthusiasm but the hours of intense interaction bring about unexpected anxieties. Learning new skills such as empathic listening and responding, as well as concentrating on someone else's need - separating the self from the person requiring help - is generally new behavior for the peer helper. But pressures diminish in the face of a growing understanding. During role playing the peer helper discovers that personal issues thought to be only their's are also held by others yet each individual is responsible for their unique solution. The peer helper witnesses other helpers grow in problem solving through the mutual interventions learned in the training. Students are deeply touched by this experience. The peer helper develops a stronger sense of self and a belief in the efficacy of the process of peer helping. A seed of hope is planted in the sometimes arid soil of alienated, hopeless and disenchanted young people.

Early in the training the peer helper sees anew that although each individual is unique, the pains of daily living do not belong to only a few. Through the mutual sharing of problems in the safe climate of role playing, the peer helper discovers a commonality of fears, fantasies, needs and problems. The protective layers of individual psyches can be peeled away to reveal the universal need and longing of each one - to be loved and to give love. When a person commits to learning about themselves and extends to help others they join what peer helpers call a "caring community". For many alienated adolescents the concept of community is a new one. With these insights comes awareness that in participating in such a 'caring community' fears arising from differences of race, age, gender and class begin to disappear. In a way, feelings of aloneness are alleviated - this can provide a very powerful sense of relief; this glimpse of our interconnectedness.

Simultaneously peer helpers learn that they can be effective in relationship with others *without* accepting responsibility for the decisions and behaviors of others. They may devote themselves by being committed to helping and supporting but they are not effective if they subsume their beings in service to others. This gives rise to further discussion regarding the roles assigned to the sexes and the ways in which those roles have been interpreted.

During peer training the focus is on the vitality of the present. In fact the creative potential of the "Now" is repeatedly emphasized in my own training sessions. Nevertheless understanding one's communication patterns and belief systems inevitably draws the family of origin into the picture. My experience has repeatedly been that by the third or fourth session references to individual's families in role plays or debriefing are frequent. This is not a formally recognized function of peer helper training however time is provided outside the sessions to talk in depth about family matters if they arise. I emphasize that this factor is of great significance and not to be ignored in the growth process.

Peer helpers in training learn skills, or perhaps more aptly the 'arts of caring', such as initiating a relationship, suspending critical judgment, listening attentively, communicating empathy and expressing warmth and genuineness. Adolescents place a top priority on these abilities naturally. Their friendships and intimate relationships are a primary concern. They come to see the training as a means of formalizing and accentuating those arts by analyzing them, practicing them, applying them to their own lives, and gaining the confidence to use them.

Trainees often come to the training with certain distortions in their self-perception. They are *self-defeating* behaviors such as self-pity, psychological dependence, procrastination, living in the past, guilt, rigid thinking, ethnocentricity and external control needs (Yalom, 1975). The nature of the training process encourages self-observation, risk-taking, feedback and reexamination of fantasy in a safe environment. One assumption of my proposition here is that many of the dilemmas of life are brought about not so much by objective circumstances as by a lack of self knowledge. Humans need to be reassured and accepted and their desire to avoid unpleasantness will often override the need to know the truth. But as mentioned earlier one presupposition of this model is the premise, "The truth will set you free so seek to understand yourself." Peer counsellors and counselees may learn that self-deception can turn to self-acceptance through self-disclosure.

Peer counselling is based on several existential pressupositions. In the existential way of thinking each individual is a believing, choosing, deciding, acting, creating being. One great theme of existential thought is the importance of taking responsibility for one's own life and actions. The rallying cry is "freedom with responsibility" (Peavy, 1986). Peer counselling seeks to help teenagers learn and apply an *attitude* which will facilitate that kind of responsibility, that level of freedom. It involves both counsellors and counselees in a process that stimulates self-emergence and authenticity. What that notion of authenticity entails must now be examined.

CHAPTER 3

AUTHENTICITY

"Each of us, moment after moment, must make our own way, and when we do, that way will express the universal way. This is the mystery." S. Suzuki

We live in a culture preoccupied with authenticity. Perhaps even obsessed. "Be yourself!", "Go your own way.", "Discover your own voice" "Follow your inner self", "Create your reality", "It's the real thing!" While the notion of authenticity is relatively new (about two centuries old) and "peculiar to modern Western culture" (Taylor, 1991, pg. 25) it has entered our collective consciousness in the latter part of the 20th century to such an extent that I believe it is not only timely, not just appropriate, but significantly important to define and understand it thoroughly both in evolving a personal philosophy and in constructing a pedagogical style.

A tug of war wages ever more intensely between authenticity supporters and dissenters. One group polemically condemns this preoccupation with authenticity for its pandering to selfish egoism, the other roundly celebrates it as it is in its generally understood popular forms. In the recently aired Massey Lecture Series on CBC Radio, political scientist Dr. Charles Taylor says, "Instead of dismissing this culture [of authenticity] altogether, or just endorsing it exactly as it is, we ought to attempt to raise its practice by making more palpable to its participants what the ethic they subscribe to really involves" (Toronto, 1991).

This chapter seeks to 'make more palpable' the notion of authenticity for several reasons. One is that I maintain that authenticity is an ideal worth espousing and I will attempt to

illustrate that. Secondly I feel it is an ethic that is evolving in the consciousness of Western culture and aiding in an understanding of one of the most important facets of human Being. This is so in that it calls us to work out our own opinions and beliefs for ourselves and to tap the creative core of our being for new directions. It points us towards a more self-responsible form of living because it requires that in discovering, articulating and choosing we more fully appropriate our lives as our own. Lastly, as a teacher, I hold a belief that education signifies a process of unfolding, of becoming. The teacher's function, according to this view, is to make it possible for a student to realize their inborn potentialities, to actualize themselves in a sense. However this is accomplished, the objective is to permit the learner to be whatever they have it in them to be. Because I conceive of education in this way I prize honesty, creativity, and critical self-responsibility. I hope to see a society composed of autonomous and authentic individuals each committed to their own form of 'excellence', to pursuing what really matters to them and what they most care about in accountable ways. I see students choosing to learn and choosing wisely only when they commit themselves to achieve their own reality, only when they define their own fundamental project - to act on their own possibilities and be held responsible for their choice. This requires authenticity.

Genuineness and Self-Deception

One generally accepted synonym for authenticity is 'genuineness'. I am not speaking of the genuineness of things such as an authentic Gauguin painting, an authentic Model-T reproduction, but of genuineness in people. When I refer to some *one* as being genuine I mean, for one thing, that they are accurately assessing and expressing their full range of emotions. When they are angry they do not feign indifference, when they are lonely or sad they do not hide behind a nicely smiling mask. When they are gleeful they do not stifle it. Obviously emotional genuineness requires a great deal of self knowledge - a rigorous honesty, an ongoing critical awareness. And genuineness is more than real

affect, it is also real expression of ideals and passions; what one really cares about, what one is most wanting to pursue, to evaluate, to articulate through the creative force of their life. We often adopt beliefs and behaviors that are not genuine in order to remain safely incognito before others. The danger in this is that we become disguised to ourselves, camouflaged with thin pleasant smiles and superficial chatter or brittle indifference and frozen feelings. In doing this we counterfeit our lives, disguised to others and to ourselves. To live genuinely is to seek out, not hide from, a certain degree of rawness and ambiguity in life. To be open to the unknown, the paradoxical. To live genuinely is very difficult. The human tendency to seek the safe and the comfortable prefers to rationalize and explain away those tendencies by excusing them on the basis of "That's just my nature"; "I can't help that, it's the way I am"; "I've always been that way". It is a kind of self deception that Sartre described as 'bad faith'. It is bad faith to shuffle off our ultimate freedom to create ourselves. We do this by denying that we are personally accountable for creating our persons and our destinies by the choices which determine the events and circumstances of our lives.

The self deception that is implicit in 'bad faith' is not necessarily conscious lying, it can be subtle and unconscious. The motivation for deception is usually based on the need to perceive the self as acceptable, invulnerable, worthwhile. It can manifest itself as false beliefs, as hypocritical actions, as pseudofeelings, or an eagerness to accept an interpretation, a set of beliefs, an attitude of another who might grant outside approval. In self deception we are looking for evidence of our OKness and we rationalize away mistakes or elements of failure.

In the previous chapter Nell struggles against bad faith when she confronts her rationalizations about her failing grades in physics. As an honors student for her to dismiss her responsibility by stating that, "I've never been any good at physics - I just

can't do it" is to miss the opportunity to examine her beliefs and subsequent behaviors. To act in 'good faith' she must confront her tendency to shun the hard mental work of understanding scientific principles and she must examine the deception that she is incapable of understanding when what is required perhaps is simply more time and attention paid to studying, or to bringing those principles into relevance in her own life, or to letting go of the social stereotype of the unattractive brainy girl who is good at maths and sciences. If she *does* confront, it may lead her to a reassertion of her genuine self - a capable, competent young woman who can grasp and manipulate principles and laws. In order to be genuine she must first rid herself of self deception and then lay claim to autonomy.

Autonomy

Autonomy is a state of independent self-governance. It refers to the capacity to reason things out for oneself and act on those reasoned alternatives. It indicates the freedom and ability to make informed, rational choices. It is cognitive, defensible reasoning well informed by facts and knowledge. The autonomous choice is hopefully backed by good reasons (that is, good by virtue of making sense - they would make sense to anybody, anybody would think they are good). But while we may as a culture, a society, a species, agree as to what constitutes good reasons we must as autonomous beings figure out for *ourselves* what is right, true, false etc. We cannot *simply* conform to what authorities, experts or any others might tell us.

According to educational philosophers such as R.S. Peters, P.H. Hirst, R.F. Dearden, autonomy is equated with authenticity, they see no distinction between them. I posit that there is a distinction, but that autonomy is one contributing element to authenticity.

The autonomous choice requires that I rationally choose for myself between the options as I believe them to be. The authentic choice requires that this choosing be governed by a significant sense of ownership. 'Owned' (as is popular in the current vernacular) with a "certain pregnant sense of *own* " (Bonnett, 1978, pg 54). That is, it must be free (insomuch as human beings *can* be free) from the pressures of social norm, stereotype, infatuation, delusion and others' expectation; in some sense an expression of one's true self. An authentic choice is "not what is merely objectively or intellectually relevant, but what is reasoned as the *felt* situation demands" (Bonnett, 1978, 54). That is, it incorporates more than rationality but also intuition, values, beliefs, feelings, individual judgements, personal motivations, bodily reactions, sensory capacities etc. It is choice enriched by accessing one's being.

An authentic choice is one which may or may not utilize 'reason(s)', which may or may not be well-informed, which may or may not be typically judged as 'moral', but which one senses will make one's life richer and fuller in some way by means of being authored by the genuine self. Nell may decide to pursue the acting career even though it means turning down a scholarship to do university studies and enduring the disapproval and scorn of parents and friends because she feels with all her being that she must follow her heart. She knows that a career in psychology might enable her to live a more stable existence (financially at least) but that acting draws on something in her that aches to be expressed. Thus her authentic decision may defy most 'good reasons', is likely to be considered by those 'older and wiser' as impetuous or silly and may even be judged selfish, stupid, or downright immoral considering that she may be turning *against* the thrust of her life in order to follow a more subjectively felt calling, passion or intention.

It is apparent then that there is a significant component of subjectivity to any authentic decision and it is subjective according to what *matters* to the individual, (whether that is

the development of a talent, the attainment of happiness, the welfare of one's family, duty to God, or some other matter). Nell must seek for an authentic choice regarding her future career by considering her latent and emergent talents as an actress, a dramatist, a counsellor, a teacher; what will bring her immediate and/or long term happiness and what happiness means for her. She may take into consideration the opinions of family, teachers, friends but ultimately she knows she must choose according to her own nascent philosophy and values. Nell must confront the various options that lie before her and she must be left to her devices, to make an independent choice and act upon it responsibly. The only test of whether she chose correctly or not will be the degree of authenticity she achieves, the degree of her 'good faith'. In other words she defines an identity for herself against the backdrop of her aspirations - what crucially matters to her. They are authentic if her choices are ones that have been filtered through her inner self; what Bonnett calls her "constituting self" (1978, 56). In so doing an autonomous decision picks up a creative "charge" that propels it into a genuine authorship which would otherwise not have been present. She has recognized, acknowledged and acted on her deepest 'wanting'. She has tried to answer honestly the question, "What am I wanting for myself?"

Critics of authenticity have challenged its apparently whimsical and self-centered relativism as being without consideration of others - as being selfish, hedonist. But the authenticity I am speaking about, not the trivialized versions of pop culture, nor the exclusively Sartrean version, *supposes* that when things 'matter', they exist within a framework of our significant relationships because relationships in part define our identities. Our identity-defining relationships can't really be seen as dispensable and destined for supersession whilst we make purely narcissistic and relativist choices. This notion is supported by Gilligan's research on moral development (1977) which looks at women's moral development as encompassing three stages. An initial stage of focus on

the self; then a second stage in which the notion of responsibility is used to balance the claims of self against the claims of others, "This stage brings a notion of the good as *caring* for others; it involves a protective care for the dependent and unequal." (Gilligan in Almond, 1988, p 46). And finally a third stage suffuses the being wherein the "tensions between conformity and care, selfishness and responsibility are dissipated by a self" which in Gilligans words, "becomes the arbiter of an independent judgement". This emphasizes a positive conception of caring contrasted to the legalistic policy of non-interference suggested by an emphasis on rights as posited by Kohlberg.

In other words I am suggesting that we pursue authentic self-fulfillment by choosing with some degree of regard for others but with ultimate respect for our framework of significance. The authentic choice is, in this sense, 'selfish' because it is to enable our self to live a richer, fuller, more authentic life. Even Mother Teresa, who by most standards is a self-less individual, has made her life choices based on what her *self* desires and aspires to - what she most deeply cares about.

One may note that the choices that originate from this 'true self' are often very difficult to articulate, to assign language and reasons to. "I do it because it's what is in me to do." "I don't know why, I just have to do it." "It's what I care about."

The "Care Structure"

The 'true self' is a caring self - a complex structure of self care. We care about what matters to us. For Heidegger, consciousness is grounded in the notion of 'care'. He says a human being is "A being whose ultimate aim is the care of its Beingness" (Heidegger in Solomon, 1972). Because all human consciousness is grounded in this 'care', it follows then that thought and action are meaningless, even unintelligible, if nothing *matters*.

Something can only matter to an entity that cares for itself - where it is going, what it will experience, that is, an entity "whose own being is an issue for it" (Solomon, 1972).

"This is not a unitary capacity, but devolves into many powers: for example, to reflect upon one's personality, to assess the situations in which one is placed, to examine the language one speaks, to reflect on the goals to pursue in one's life, to consider the value to be put on one's activities, to examine how one came by one's beliefs, to assess one's emotional responses, to think on how to widen the projects and possibilities open to one. These are powers of self-concern." (Cooper, 1983, pg 15)

(An important distinction should be made here between the Heideggerian emphasis on what I will call the *caring will* and the Sartrean notion of the *empty will*. Sartre's authenticity demands a 'radical choice' wherein one, in total abandonment of outside forces, subjectively, affectively, but without reasons or rationale, throws oneself towards one choice or another. For Heidegger the authentic choice derives motivational force through filtering decision through the care structure and acting with regard to what thus matters.)

Self concern or care is then the essence of our being. It is the fountainhead of authenticity. Neither is the notion of a caring self unfamiliar in scientific inquiry. This 'depth structure' could reasonably be conceived to be, at least in part, an intricate web woven of genetic potentials (encoded in DNA) which includes among many other things: talents, personality, proclivities, and weaknesses, which serve to motivate our aspirations, ideals, beliefs and our sense of purpose. This depth structure propels us in certain directions - it provides a framework for choice but does not determine choice. It influences but does not decide. It impels but does not predestine. We are agents with

free will and freedom to exercise our will. However, even given a framework of DNA potentialities, even granted a spirit with certain traits and bearings impressed upon it - the human being creates its experience by "taking hold or neglecting" (Heidegger in Solomon, 1972, pg 208). By 'neglecting' Heidegger means that many people choose by not consciously choosing - but simply accepting a given way of life, societal enculturation, role stereotypes etc. They may (as most thinking persons do) face the question of Being but not articulately and without giving serious considerations to all the alternatives. Most men and women face the questions of Being, Purpose, and Meaning by simply accepting a given way of life and conforming to its norms. This is the paradigm of inauthenticity. For example, Nell could become caught up in the heat and magic of a relationship with her boyfriend, put both career options on a back burner and pursue marriage and children instead. It is not what most deeply matters to her but she is given much confirmation in her good fortune, her community supports and applauds the marriage and for the time, both of them are swept into roles and norms that are much older than they.

But in the extreme, neglecting one's care structure can lead to suicidal despair. A suicidal person is one who feels that "nothing matters anymore" who is shut off from his or her own care structure. Suppose Nell chooses to marry rather than pursue career education. Over the course of an intensive year of marriage she comes to realize some new things. What she initially believed to be a deep love for her boyfriend is in reality an infatuation with the notion of being a wife. She is 'in love' with the idea of being loved. In rethinking her marriage commitment she comes up against her husband's opposition to her desires to do 'other things' and the possibility that she may want to be free of the marriage bond. In coming to terms with her self deception and the harsh and painful realities that ensue Nell forgets her other options and slides into a depression and then a suicidal despond wherein nothing matters. She writes a friend, "This has been a dreadful

mistake, and the truth is I guess I don't much care about being married anymore - I'm afraid it was largely a fantasy but I don't really care about anything else either. I am immobilized, what's the use?"

Poesis

In order for Nell to choose life and self growth she must once again become "significantly there" (Bonnett, 1978, 54). "There" in the sense that she is decidedly present with concerned understanding for herself. She must begin again to make authentic choices - to contribute her subjective ingredient to the external, objective factors. She must summon the courage to bring herself into a new relationship with external reality. This involves *poiesis* - a creative making (Taylor, 1991). The creative element in one's life orientation includes exploring, making, trying out, picking up, rearranging, and communicating the new. As Peavy (1977, 15) puts it, "the person who lives authentically is awake and wishes to express something important about life on earth as it is experienced anew by them." Nell's *poesis* in this situation may be to leave the marriage and determinedly go to theatre school or on to university or she may choose to apply her self to creating a marriage, a role for herself within her marriage, that authentically expresses what most matters to her. Nell does not necessarily have to choose an eccentric or unusual path - she may choose a completely conventional life (eg. marriage and children) and live it very authentically. Under the sway of creativity an individual is in some way dissatisfied with existing expressions and organizations of experience. They seem inadequate because they do not communicate one's own authentic experience with sufficient precision, clarity, uniqueness. The creative or authentic impulse is to utilize and transform the old and established; the compliant tendency is to retain things as they 'have been'. We do this by putting our own original and unique slant on things and not accepting *any* experience or phenomena as a 'given'. It does not

mean one has to choose only the outrageous, the unconventional, the unusual - one could come to choose authentically a very ordinary role or purpose.

In order to again return to authenticity Nell must seek some guidance - guidance that originates in her true self - her care structure. This guidance is "A receptivity to the wide range of options for reality that confront us. It empowers us with a critical questioning and an active yet loving mode of being in the world." (Peavy, 1977, 5). The guidance which is required for authentic adulthood originates in one's own ground of being, one's own orientation to life.

The orientation that best serves the authentic individual, in the most healthy way, has three dynamic and interrelating elements. Creativity, self-reliance and love. Self-reliance is the knowledge that we are first and always primarily responsible for the personal directing of our own life. I personally develop by my own choices, proposals and projects. I accept the consequences of my choices. I thereby create a life project based on the present - the creative now - and which is directed towards the future. Heidegger calls this 'existenz', the possibility and understanding born of the projection of choices or options. It is one component of beingness. Because humans can postulate any end they choose, the freedom of the creative choice is its power. This orientation keeps open theoretically unlimited possibilities of personal, social and cultural attainment.

Inauthenticity

There are a great many facets of our society which attempt to deny self reliance but we can only have victory over them, and retain, regain, our selves by developing a critical awareness of those factors which serve to obliterate us; such as our educational, religious, societal institutions, our heavy reliance on experts other than ourselves - all those who know more than or better than we do; our doctors, lawyers, politicians, teachers, sooth

sayers, media, even our mechanics! Heidegger would call this 'fallenness' - the capacity to forget (or refuse to recognize) one's true existential nature and immerse oneself in the illusions of petty tasks as they present themselves. This leads to 'average everydayness' which is characterized by mindlessness, busyness, ennui, boredom.

The final component of Heidegger's beingness is 'facticity' - the circumstances of one's incarnation; time, place, family of origin, DNA, significant shaping events etc. A vast porportion of our culture lives inauthentically by allowing many conditions of their *existenz* (what they do have choice in) to slide into a perception of *facticity* (believing it is a matter beyond their control). For example this can be evidenced in the current societal trend to blame parents for all one's defects of character. Whatever the blame accruing, if the individual does not claim full personal responsibility for how they now choose to live and conduct their lives, then this blockage to authenticity will not be brought to resolution. It remains a barrier to the full expression of the self. Those experiences which one does not have 'control' over (for example the death of a loved one, the illnesses in others, the family of origin) are still *open* to the authentic choice. In other words how I choose to respond to circumstances, how I 'hold' events and situations in my consciousness determines their impact on me, their potential for learning and very possibly their outcome. Said another way, I am thrown into my *facticity*, but my beliefs, attitudes and behaviors for confronting these circumstances are undetermined until chosen by me.

And so a third element in the orientation which I prescribe is the element of love. As members of the human community we cannot live as anything other than social beings. Our personal existence is fragile, whatever support we can discover and confirm, we must find in our relationships with other human beings. The quality of our lives and even the ultimate question of whether we will survive at all rests on the web of human support we

are able to construct with our fellow kind. Yes we are certainly very different from one another and in some sense very alone and separate. That cannot and should not be denied - our love for each other and for ourselves must embrace that difference, that individuality. This kind of love embraces authenticity. It manifests in Greene's words as a "tender regard" for the self and the projects which fulfill it (Greene, 1973). It extends that caring regard in communion with others.

To review, we have discussed the component of autonomy as leading up to authenticity, and we have furthered that understanding by discussing the nature of the care structure which holds the authentic self. A further component of authenticity involves the concept of responsibility for self.

Responsibility - The 'Strongly Evaluated Choice'

I have determined that it is up to me to decide what kind of being I am going to be. I have, at least theoretically, unlimited freedom to determine - to choose the beliefs which will fuel my motivations, to choose my responses to external 'facticity', to choose my perspectives and to create the future with the choices I make. The more I exercise my 'self-concern' to evaluate what and who I am, the more I am response-able to shape myself according to this evaluation. I am the agent who possesses response-ability to live authentically or inauthentically.

Taylor (1982) delineates two modes of evaluation that lead to two orders of choice. Weak and strong evaluators, first order and second order choices. The first order choice is often what I would call an autonomous one - it is based on reasons, or preferences, or impulses. Ultimately it is motivated by the pleasure/pain principle. What will be the most gratifying/comfortable/easy/ choice? A great deal of calculation and thought may go into such a choice but it is not a second order choice until it attains a *quality* of thought.

The quality reflection that goes into a second order choice requires a certain articulacy, says Taylor - "a language of evaluative distinctions", 'noble or base', 'clairvoyant or blind', 'loving or fearful', 'higher or lower'. Of course we characterize our alternatives with many nuances of meaning - and we must do so if we are to express what is really desirable in the favored alternative. It is important to note here that articulation may not be confined to language. We articulate more perhaps by deed, in act, over time in changes slowly discernable, in gesture, ministrations and art. Regardless of how it is expressed the end goal here is the "quality of satisfaction" my choice will grant me, not the "quantity of satisfaction". In making a second order choice I may be electing to experience great struggle, difficulty, discouragement or conflict (just as Nell may in pursuing an acting career). I may in fact be walking purposefully into a situation where I will certainly experience some measure of 'pain' in order to be true to the promptings of my inner self.

Now the weak evaluator cannot articulate but *feels* their alternatives. "Which has the most pull?" (Taylor, pg114). They operate with the beginnings of authenticity - a gut instinct. The strong evaluator however begins to develop an articulacy which expresses the superiority of one over another. Nell may for many years articulate her belief in the superiority of drama over psychology as an authentic career for herself only by the dedication and delight she devotes to learning her craft. As time goes by she is able to express that more succinctly in words *and* in deed, and ultimately she will thus deepen her art.

Add to this notion of articulacy a notion of responsibility. "Radical responsibility", says Taylor, (not the subjectivism of Sartre's "radical choice") is given to those who act as "agents with depth" (Taylor 1982, 116). The authentic 'agent-with-depth' has radical responsibility to choose according to what she can articulate as really mattering to her;

what is more honest, courageous, worthy, integral, higher. Radical responsibility is to "choose in lucidity rather than to hide one's choices behind the supposed structure of things - to flee from responsibility by self duplicity." (Taylor, 1982, pg 117). In choosing authentically as an agent-with-depth Nell must in some way know *why* she does what she does. Although the supposed structure of things may dictate that a PhD. in Counselling is more worthy, integral, higher than a lifetime of experimental theatre troupes, Nell has the radical responsibility of knowing and choosing what *really* matters to her and through the acts and scenes of her life articulate what is most worthy of her and to her.

Of course one must beware that in striving for authenticity one does not go into "an extreme frenzy of self analysis" (Heidegger in Solomon, 1972, p 219). Hegel described this as "disharmony" or the "unhappy consciousness". Certainly in a society as fiercely preoccupied with authenticity as ours, it's not hard to think of those in this state even in the small sphere of personal acquaintance. And I agree with Heidegger that most of us actually strive *against* authenticity. The fundamental tendency is to refuse to recognize ourselves and turn to 'self-forgetful' chores and tasks and other self-forgetful people. The tendency is to 'put-on' costumes and masks that hide the true self - out of a misinterpreted sense of shame and guilt of what that true self is. Inauthenticity blindly follows the dictates of the public norm and the demands of the endless routines of every day life. The public world is anonymous, reassuring, comfortable. There is initial ease, lack of responsibility for oneself and a consoling mediocrity. The authentic life demands resoluteness to question and re-member. It is work. The inclination which resides in the care structure to act for example, or to teach children, or to practice psychoanalysis, does not by itself actualize a realization of such. It provides a desire but that must be developed through knowledge attainment, skills building, practice, continued intention, maturation and hard work. In essence the care structure must be birthed and nurtured

from where one is at in order to be manifest and to evolve. It requires commitment to that self.

Public Standards

This brings in the notion of public standards. Public standards or traditions could be defined as, "A common set of previously assimilated master patterns from which an infinite number of individual patterns are generated." (Bourdieu, 1971, p 192). They might be the skills of a trade; the accumulated knowledge that carpenters, surgeons, glass blowers must know. They may be the 'rules' which govern a subject such as grammar of language or physical principles of science. They may be the expectations which accompany an act or situation such as etiquette, cultural mores or ritual. Obviously these are shaped and molded by their time and place - by all the cultural, historical, political forces which interact with them. But we suppose the best remains, the dross burns away over time and each generation contributes some new knowing to these master patterns. In order to truly be authentic an individual needs rigorous grounding in these traditions and the discipline which leads to mastery. The seemingly effortless grace of the ballerina took years of study in her tradition. Once mastered she is now free to add her own creative ingredient to authentically express her gift. The great novelist, the enduring poet, the mindful contemplative, must have mastery of the rules which govern that tradition before they can effectively transmit or engage in *poesis*.

The purpose of schooling, it may be assumed, is to transmit, inculcate, impress a set of basic deeply interiorized master patterns which through habitual repetition become second nature to the individual. These master patterns require an individual's commitment and devotion if they are to be used as the tools of their authentic expression. In other words our authentic expression is birthed in part *because* of the public traditions that give birth to them. We *need* certain master patterns to nurture our own

poesis. It is not creating something from nothing. Even the genius of a Mozart or a Michelangelo required rigorous training in the traditions of their art and of their time to find expression.

Heidegger and Sartre in their formulations of authenticity remained at opposite ends of this spectrum. Heidegger insisted on the acquisition first of objective standards and traditions in order to produce the authentic expression of that tradition while Sartre advocated a *purely* subjective stance or point of origin as requisite to authenticity. This is mirrored in the two opposing views of education which are loosely termed 'traditional' and 'progressive'. The traditional view requires the mind to be filled and moulded by externally imposed public standards. The progressive view sees the proper development of the mind in terms of an innate, natural growth originating only from within. My stance is articulated well in this quote,

"It is thus the public rule structure - the *standards* - articulated and embedded in cultural traditions which constitute mind in a very fundamental sense. Only through acquisition of such standards can man enter a world of human significances. And only by reference to such standards can he in turn contribute to it, for being critical and creative involves more than mere contra-suggestability and self-expression."
(Bonnett, 1986, p 113).

This gives rise to two dangers that confront the true self. One is that in confronting the traditions of education and training in order to develop, (that is, in subjecting oneself to public standards) students will lose their own connection to their care structure. The creativity is stifled - it will not die but it can be effectively cloaked. If Nell becomes

rigidly attached to one style or method of therapeutic intervention-Freudian psychoanalysis for instance-she may lose her authentic expression. We decry our current educational system often for its over-emphasis of public standards and lack of nurturance of the individuals inherent caring. With this comes a deep sense, often unconscious, of unworthiness, hopelessness, powerlessness. The danger is that the precious essence will become a given or subsumed by the social tradition and the dominant culture.

The other danger is that in shunning tradition and public standards and uncritically adopting a particular identity, personality, or philosophic stance, students will paradoxically lose their capacity to hear *their* authentic articulation. It would be effectively silenced by a certain kind of self-deception. Herein the student is stifled by their completely subjective interpretation and their expression is lacking the attainment of depth knowledge, skills, abilities, tradition, wisdom. They are 'doing their own thing' but it is incomprehensible, unprincipled, and empty of meaning to others.

If Nell is to find truly authentic expression as an actress she must rigorously discipline herself to master the standards of her art through study and practice of the historical, cultural traditions of dramatic arts. To throw herself straight away into an avant garde improvisational theatre troupe may *convince* her she is expressing from her own very subjective authentic self but yet without the attainment of those master patterns she will not reach her potential for authentic expression. Those standards transform her wishes and wantings by making them appropriate, by making them principled.

The Dynamic

This last notion brings into play the *dynamic* aspect of authenticity. One's "thereness" is unfolding - it is modified by the experiences it gives rise to. It is not a 'fait accompli'. When we *allow* our authentic source, our genuine self, we must become willing and open

to accept any categorical change to our deep structure which might emerge. The choice here is in the acceptance or rejection. Like any birth it can be a messy and painful process. We are trying to see things more and more clearly - to articulate what has been inchoate - to pry open our closed chambers - to find a new clarity. It is even so with Nell who made the most authentic choice she could in opting for theatre school. A painful but ultimately creative year later she understood herself with a new clarity. What had been authentic was no longer so. She would have to choose anew. Because she was open to her process, this dynamic aspect of her authenticity, once she 'saw' herself with increased clarity she became vitally interested in finding a new path to follow, new ways to perceive of herself. Perhaps she may enter counselling psychology and sometime in the future utilize drama therapy as part of her therapeutic repertoire - that may be one of many possible authentic responses to her human situation.

To summarize, authenticity involves; 1) genuineness in 'good faith' 2) autonomy 3) discovery of one's 'core structure' - what matters 4) creative *poesis* through conscious choice making 5) some critical questioning of the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as 'morality' 6) a self definition achieved through the strongly evaluated choice, a bringing out from the private self into the public 7) openness to what is significant, and the changes that may bring.

Authenticity and inauthenticity refer to qualities involved in the character of a person's relationship with herself. Because virtually all persons are involved in relationships we need to understand the nature of authenticity in order to make its reality possible. In other words authenticity is at the heart of coming into a personally significant relationship with the world - it represents the deepest possibility of human Being. How this might be fostered through peer counselling may now be examined.

CHAPTER 4

SYNTHESIS

"So when you try hard to make your own way, you will help others, and you will be helped by others. Before you make your own way you cannot help anyone, and no one can help you." S. Suzuki

Having examined the nature of Peer Counselling in Chapter 2 and Authenticity in Chapter 3 this chapter will address the facets of authenticity that may be fostered in the counsellee in a peer counselling interaction. In going through the process of being counselled by a qualified peer counsellor the counsellee may discover more of their own authentic genuineness, response, choice, and care structure. As Cooper delineates (cited in Ch. 3, pg 81), the "self-concern" of authentic consciousness is experienced in specific acts: when we genuinely assess our emotional responses, when we accountably (without blaming) take responsibility for our circumstances, when we examine the language we speak, when we honestly and openly reflect on our personality without self-deception and when we creatively choose our projects from our care structure and seek to express and expand our possibilities. These are turning points when we see through our own defenses, deceptions, denials and set a more authentic course.

Peer counselling is a supportive intervention that may help to promote authenticity in the counsellee by precipitating such insight, self honesty, self acceptance, radical responsibility and poesis. The specific elements of peer counselling that most aid in this process are: empathic listening, questioning, encouragement for self disclosure, clarification of values and beliefs and creative decision making. In a series of reflective pieces I am seeking to: a) recreate actual peer counselling scenarios and dialogues that demonstrate a move from inauthenticity to authenticity in the ways mentioned above; and b) to reflect on how the counsellee is able to use empathy, questioning, disclosure,

clarification and choice making to arrive at a more authentic perspective. These reflections, though unique and discrete, will build upon the five functions of peer counselling that I have delineated. That is, the first will examine the use of empathic listening to promote authenticity; the second will examine empathic listening and questioning; the third, listening, questioning, self disclosure and belief clarification; and the fourth all the above plus a decision making sequence.

Empathy and Genuine Emotional Response

Empathy is an understanding and acceptance of another's feelings and the reasons for those feelings. It is a deep subjective "feeling with" or a "feeling into". It is an understanding of where the other is coming from. It differs from sympathy which implies feeling the same way another is feeling. The *empathic listening* of peer counselling may be better described as *active listening* because it involves both putting oneself in the other's shoes and showing understanding by mirroring, paraphrasing and accurately identifying how the other feels. Thus this active listening actually involves two aspects, listening with empathy and expressing that empathy. Listening with empathy is particularly demanding because listeners are not to state their opinions. They must be quiet, listen attentively and accept the others' subjective reality for what it is in that moment. Good attending helps accomplish this (F.E.L.O.R.) by *showing* "I am listening." "I am focused on you." "I want to understand how it is for you." Expressing that empathy requires the counsellor to have a large repertoire of feeling words which can accurately identify the feelings being expressed and the reasons for those feelings so the other understands them. Expressing with empathy has three components: identifying feelings, identifying the situation/content, and responding to feelings and content in a way which lets the other know the counsellor is with them in understanding. For example, Sondra grapples with her emotions and the peer counsellor responds thus:

Sondra. (Sobbing) I don't know why I'm crying, it just came out.

Peer Counsellor Nell. You're really hurting.

S. And I don't know why. (Sobbing)

(Silence)

S. It's just that whenever Jay and I go out and do stuff together I feel so... I dunno invisible or no, it's not that, it's like everything I say is wrong or he doesn't agree or its just so... I can't explain it. Like he never insults me or says "That's dumb" it's just so... I just feel it.

PC. When you and Jay are together it triggers a lot of painful feelings that you can't yet identify. Sometimes you wonder if it's just in your imagination.

S. (Fresh sobs) Yeah. I *do* wonder if it's just me - that there's really something wrong with me. That the things I say *are* stupid or weird or wrong.

(Silence)

S. And I'm crying because I'm so hurt that this person I love makes me feel so bad and I can't figure it out.

PC. You feel discounted and by someone you love. You want them to respect your thoughts and feelings as much as you do their's.

S. Yes! That's it. I feel discounted. Like what I say doesn't count.

(Silence)

Gawd that really sucks doesn't it. Now I feel mad.

PC. It makes you mad that someone would discredit your ideas and opinions.

S. He does too - and he does it so well I'm not even sure he knows it. Why would he do that? So he can feel like more of a man? Well, now I don't feel so bad...

PC. You feel stronger to have identified what you feel and why. You know you're not stupid, wrong or weird.

Notice in this interchange that the counsellor's use of listening with and expressing empathy is more than a mere reflection of content or of feeling. It is more than a mimicking. It is not simply objective knowledge "I know what your problem is" which is an evaluative understanding *about* the client. And it is not *sympathetic*. The peer counsellor is not affected by like feelings (pity or sorrow or distress) but does **engage with** Sondra without exploiting her states and circumstances. This interchange is deep and subjective, a care-full understanding *of* Sondra *with* Sondra in that moment.

The listening, mirroring and paraphrasing of this interaction helps to foster a facet of authenticity in part because Sondra (the counsellee) sets the pace. She takes the lead, she directs where she wants to go, how far and how fast. This builds trust, allows free exploration of thoughts and feelings and permits Sondra to "own" her feelings without shame or pretense. It is a rare enough occasion to be heard without interference. If/when the peer counsellor shows they can be trusted, the counsellee is free to be real and honest and to share their hurts, secrets and longings. Sondra is supported by Nell in clarifying her confusion. She is aided in her search to genuinely assess and address her

feelings. In becoming more specifically conscious and aware, she emerges with a new freedom to choose how she will deal with the problem. She has taken an important initial step towards authenticity - she has arrived at a moment of genuine understanding of her feelings. In a sense the process of active listening, or listening and expressing with empathy is like a conversation with one's inner self - it opens an opportunity for Sondra to articulate what has until then remained below the surface and largely unconscious - that is - out of the realm of her conscious choosing. Brought into the light of conscious awareness she now has more freedom to choose how she will deal with the problem - to take responsibility for her part in this dynamic or to discover what opportunity for her own (and perhaps J.'s) growth lies in this aspect of their relationship. Each of these understandings opens a new avenue for authentic or inauthentic choosing though none of it may occur if she is not first able to come to a genuine assessment of her feelings.

Questioning and Rigorous Self Honesty

A question can be an indictment or it can be an invitation. A peer counsellor evokes questions as gifts; given without judgement or condition in order to aid another in their journey. For every human journey follows many different paths. For a time everything works, then nothing works. Often unwittingly we stumble onto a particular path, a course of action. Often we don't deliberately make the significant decision. Instead we come to realize that somewhere along the line the decision has already been made. But once we recognize where we are, we must consciously choose to do what we are already doing or to take a new path if we want to be authentic. In choosing for authenticity we must accept responsibility *without blame* for this place in our journey.

The peer counsellor may step onto another's path at a number of different junctures. The counsellee may seek help or support at a point where the old path seems to go nowhere and their need is to understand why that is so before they can choose anew. Or the counsellee may be on a new path but bewildered as to how they got there and be blaming

themselves or others or external events rather than accepting responsibility without blame. Here they need to evaluate, surrender and responsibly accept the choice as their own.

Paradoxically, before we can be free we must accept responsibility for the choices we make. A peer counselling intervention may help another to that place of radical responsibility through open facilitative questions which encourage the counsellee to explore their thoughts and feelings freely (closed questions force a specific answer, often defensive). This kind of 'facilitative' questioning evokes dialectic; that spontaneous and unpredictable interplay of conversation that thrives on candour and trust. To thus create a space for someone to discover and to tell how they really think and feel, freed from the defense of projection onto others, is to open a door for them to be genuine, accountable and authentic.

It is a crucial insight for any of us, adolescents included, to recognize that in every important aspect of our lives, we will discover attitudes and beliefs in ourselves that we weren't aware of and find ourselves in situations that perhaps only later, perhaps only with the assistance of another, we realize we chose ourselves. A peer counselling interaction can aid in this awareness and help foster authenticity at the point at which the counsellee gives up blaming others for their own decisions.

In this scenario Brad hates English class. He creates constant conflict; throwing tantrums one day, sulkily refusing to work the next and maintaining a sarcastic stream of chatter the next. He fails to bring books to class, seldom completes work, provokes and prods the students around him. What work he does complete is fraught with mechanical and comprehension problems. It is apparent to his teachers that he is covering for his lack of skills but his behavior is such that soon he is suspended. When his suspension

ends he doesn't return. The following semester he replays the exact scenario but stays in class only two weeks. Before long he drops out, finds a job, loses it and begins to spend most nights in the local bar. Over and over in his mind he replays the past, deepening in his bitterness and blaming. One day he runs into his classmate Nell and they decide to go for coffee. Immediately he launches into his tale.

Brad: So... I hear you're going to university next year. I wanted to go to San Diego State on a golf scholarship but those jerks want high school English.

Nell: So get your English and apply.

B: I can't get English and I won't play their bullshit games. I've been in sales - it's not how ya write it's how ya talk and I'm good at that. I'm good at sales and I didn't need no English 30 for it.

N: Uh - huh. You don't feel you need high school English to succeed at what you're good at.

B: I'd *have* my English ya know if it weren't for the teachers. You remember Mr. X? He told me I wasn't honest. Sheesh I don't need nobody telling me I'm not honest. I dont havta take that! I'm not staying around for that! I left that class!

N: Hmmmmm - you felt he was questioning your integrity, your character?

B: NO! He was accusing me!

N: Of what?

B: Of not being honest - he was calling me a liar!

N: That must have hurt you. (pause)

Or made you angry (pause)

Or both. When you think back to what was going on in your life back then what was his context do you think? Was he talking about not being honest with him - or with others - or not being honest with yourself?

B: Oh I don't know.

N: Sure you know.

B: Well... then the next year I have Mrs. Z and she never let me have a textbook and she told me she hated me and she moved me the first day of class and I can't learn anything from her. She didn't want me there it was obvious.

N: She seemed closed to you from the start and you were frustrated. Why wouldn't she want you in class?

B: She hated me!

N: Uh huh... why would she hate you?

B: Gawd - who knows? Who cares? But you can see why I never got English.

N: Brad why would you let other people's opinions (or your impressions of other's opinions) keep you from getting what you want?

B: What is this - the third degree?

N: Nope - no pressure at all. That wasn't a judgement - it was just a question for you. Answer it only for yourself - whenever. Or not.

B: O.K. what was the question?

N: Why would you let *other's* opinions keep you from getting what you want?

B: Because I can't do English. I hate it.

N: O.K. English class - it's really frustrating for you. What parts are tough?

B: Well, writing, and I read real slow.

N: Do you feel you understand what you read?

B: I'm not stupid ya know.

N: I know - you're bright and capable. So it takes you a little longer to read. So what? Maybe you wanted to be faster in high school so you wouldn't be embarrassed in front of your friends but now you're not in that situation. What about your writing - could you work on it?

B: I don't see why it's so important. It's stupid. I'm gonna write San Diego State and complain about those requirements.

N: Well sure, that's one choice. Is it kinda like the choice you made to leave school without English?

B: Look I admit I didn't want to be there - then.

N: You didn't want to be in English class because it was hard for you and you felt frustrated. Because you were frustrated you made it frustrating for your teachers.

B: Yeah I suppose.

N: Its really important to understand what our choices are and why we made them. So you made some choices then. You still have choices - you always have choices. Only you can give yourself the life you want. Can I ask you a question? What do you really really want in your life - for your own life?

B: I dunno. All I know is I don't wanna stay in this stinkin town pissin away my life at the bar every night.

N: Yeah - I can understand that. That might feel like defeat.

B: I'm too young to feel this defeated.

N: You feel defeated.

Silence

N: You feel defeated because of some choices you made in the past. But heh the past is over ya know. Over and done thank goodness. We can start fresh anytime. What choices would get you moving again?

B: Sigh.

Try English upgrading at the college, do something that doesn't require high school English. I dunno. I'll havta think on it Nelly. But it was good talking to ya. Come down to the bar and I'll buy ya a beer sometime.

It's obvious here that Brad wants to avoid responsibility for his choices. But each time he offers a new reason why others have denied or blocked his chance to get English credit,

Nell places the responsibility gently back on him forcing him into a more self honest, self responsible position. Through active, focused, listening Nell seeks to hear how it was and how it is for Brad. As well, she uses questions to counteract his self deceptive blaming, evasion of responsibility, denial of personal choice , and avoidance of personal creativity. Initially he dodges, each time diverting to a fresh assault on others without pausing to accept his part. The peer counsellor continues to actively listen, that is to mirror back not only content but Brad's unspoken (perhaps largely unacknowledged feelings). "That hurt you." "You were angry." "You feel defeated." As she clarifies, perhaps for the first time, Brad's feelings in the matter, she creates an opening for him to finally be acknowledged, heard and understood. In accepting his reactions as valid for him (by suspending her personal judgements) she gives Brad the freedom he needs to come to accept his own part in this situation. When he at last says, "because I can't do English" he has taken an important step. Though he backs away again he returns to an accountable, authentic position when he says: "I admit I didn't wanna be there." In this moment the part of Brad's interior dialogue that has been drowned out by the more insistent, quarrelsome voices of blame, finally has an opportunity to speak. This voice accepts personal responsibility "in good faith." He has voiced what has been silent. Nell's empathic echo has enabled a first step towards authenticity - acknowledgement of feelings. The silence following Brad's admission that beneath his bitterness is a feeling of defeat is likely a silence full of potential. This is the potential that Rogers speaks of in regard to listening with empathy.

"If I can listen to what he tells me, if I can understand how it seems to him, if I can sense the emotional flavor which it has for him, then I will be releasing potent forces of change within him." (Rogers in Carr, 1980, 151)

These potent forces may enable him at last to forgive himself, forgive others and to move on in the light of his own 'self concern' this time.

A second essential ingredient in this movement towards authenticity is the peer counsellor's use of questions. Nell uses questions in a variety of ways. Sometimes to clarify for Brad; "Dishonest with others or yourself?" "What parts are tough?" Sometimes to confront; "Why would you allow...?" "Is it like the choice you made to leave without English?" and sometimes to open up a new avenue of thought; "What do you most want for yourself?" "What choices would get you moving again?"

Brad may have a way to go yet before he can begin to make authentic choices from his deep care structure. He claims he doesn't know what he wants, what *does* matter to him. This may be so because so much of his energy has previously gone into fighting with his resentments and fears, his inauthenticity. Perhaps he needs to allow his feelings, so recently dredged up, to settle before he can realistically go about choosing again, but a crucial movement has been successfully initiated, supported by Nell's listening without condemnation or deception and her use of questions. Ultimately it is enacted by the counsellee himself from his own choosing. Because Nell consistently avoids taking responsibility for Brad's behavior and decisions, by not playing into his self-pitying nor sinking into his defeatism, he is eventually confronted with coming to terms with his own personal power. It may be the support he needs to move toward a valuing of his experience as a learning opportunity rather than a bitter failure, to achieving greater self trust in his ability to control his own life and to arriving at a more committed willingness to grow, based on his own 'self-concern'. Said another way, Brad has been given an opportunity to *reflect* on his own life and thus is in a new position to make authentic decisions about it.

I Messages and Strongly Evaluated Choices

As a counsellee begins to discover how they truly feel and what they now choose to do, the next step is often to communicate that to someone significant in the scenario. The process of authenticity can quickly deteriorate at this point if the way in which they articulate is not self-accountable; that is if self-responsible "I" messages turn into blaming "You" messages.

One way of preventing problems in our relationships, and certainly the only way to move into authenticity, is to take responsibility for our own beliefs, feelings, thoughts, actions and the language we speak. "I" messages describe what's happening inside. They say, "Here's what it feels like to be me" as opposed to, "How come you're making me". Peer counsellors can model for, demonstrate and coach counsellees in this use of the language. It is a kind of empathic expression of one's own self. It requires an intimate self awareness and a commitment to articulate that. It can be broken down into five parts:

1. Acknowledging it's *my* belief, opinion, value, attitude.
2. Becoming specifically and accurately aware of the feeling component and stating that using an "I" message.
3. Describing specifically the behaviors or circumstances which contribute to my feeling that way.
4. Being specific regarding my expected or desired behavior.
5. Showing empathy of the other if possible.

When the counsellee is able to combine all five components into a communication, they are expressing what Carr & Saunders call a "full-bore I message" (1980, pg 82). It contains a non-blaming description of behavior, a statement of personal feeling and a statement of its tangible effects. For example, in working with a peer counsellor over time Sondra is eventually able to evaluate her reactions, and articulate specifically and directly to Jay:

"When you smirk and roll your eyes when I'm telling a story I get deeply hurt because I feel discounted and patronized. I've been hoping you'd rather listen and accept me because you care for me. When you casually criticize me and point out my errors in logic it makes me feel small and defensive. I wonder why you would

even want me for a girlfriend. I want a boyfriend who is proud to be with me and respects my thinking."

Through this kind of 'strong evaluation' of her choice and her articulation of that Sondra has also come to an authentic recognition of what matters to her, a boyfriend who admires and respects her.

Indeed in striving to substitute personal pronouns , "I, me, mine" for "other-referenced" pronouns "you, yours, theirs", counselees often confront themselves, and a desire to be more specific, more considered, more honest is born. Again the authentic qualities of self awareness and commitment to personal responsibility are emphasized and expressed. For example a counsellee is finally able to speak to a teacher who she feels consistently embarrasses her by putting her down in class. She says,

"I often feel that I am being put-down when you joke to the class about my answers. Everybody gets a laugh but me and while I smile I'm really very hurt. I'm starting to resent coming to class and I don't want this to affect my grades. I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't do that Mr. X. cause I'm pretty sensitive."

Another might tell his girlfriend, whom he has regularly stood up on dates,

"Sue I realize that I've often said I'd take you out and then made other plans. Sometimes I haven't even bothered to let you know - I guess because I felt guilty. What it really boils down to is that I don't want to have to spend every weekend night with only you - I want to be with my other friends and have more freedom. I guess we need to come to some kind of understanding about it."

Authenticity demands that we accurately assess and then own our own feelings; the anger and irritation, the joy and contentment. It demands that we be willing to contemplate how our beliefs and behaviors have created the circumstances we find ourselves in. A communication using 'full-bore I messages' demands that we align ourselves *with* ourselves in authentic articulation.

Belief Clarification and Radical Responsibility

Peer counselling operates on a philosophical assumption that the more aware we are of our values, attitudes and beliefs - those frameworks that govern our behavior - the more control we have in our reality, and the more opportunity we have to be genuine, autonomous and authentic. Becoming aware and conscious of our beliefs is a life long task, one which requires commitment, critical awareness, questioning of established norms, and rigorous self honesty. Our values and beliefs can become rigid and inflexible or they can be constantly in flux which adds another dimension of challenge to the task.

It may be beyond the function of a peer counsellor to awaken a counsellee to their core beliefs. Perhaps this can only be achieved by a therapist. It certainly requires time, willingness and readiness of the counsellee. Our beliefs form the framework by which we reference ourselves and ourselves in the world. A shift in beliefs means a shift in our perception of reality and eventually a shift in the physical manifestations of our lives. Such shifts are, of course, unsettling, to say the least. As well, false or self-defeating beliefs are often formed to protect something wounded or vulnerable in the psyche. The counsellee must be fully willing and strong enough to uncover those vulnerabilities. This may not be within the domain of a peer counselling interaction. Nevertheless it *may* be possible for a peer counsellor to *introduce* a counsellee to the notion that beliefs and values affect our choices and that once recognized they can be chosen anew - indeed must be chosen anew in order to allow us authentic expression. A peer counsellor may also help a counsellee understand that negative or self-defeating beliefs instilled in us in childhood or through our growing up years often continue to impinge on our lives. They keep us from acting with our full potential or in the directions which we would choose from our wanting and care. When we are controlled by the strings of other's values or chained by beliefs formed in the long ago past we cannot be authentic in the present.

For example: Kim has come to an awareness of sorts that her schoolwork, extracurricular activities and part-time job are suddenly too much. She's suffering bouts

of depression, crying and laughing jags, and is so withdrawn and lethargic her family and friends have become concerned. They contact the school counselor who asks Nell to contact her first. After some preliminaries the dialogue begins to take a shape.

Kim: Yeah I'm depressed - it'll pass. I'm just so tired of it all.

Nell: What do you mean by "it all?"

K: Oh, school, grades, honor roll, volleyball, debating, grad executive, job, parents, friends, people, people, people.

N: Whew sounds like a heavy load. Why does it suddenly feel so heavy do ya think?

K: I dunno - I don't care either. So what? Why try? Who cares? I quit! This sucks!

N: You're feeling so discouraged you'd like to drop out for awhile.

K: Yeah kinda - just go to sleep. Forever.

N: That sounds kinda suicidal. Is that how you feel?

K: I feel that if I tried harder, worked harder, really cared, I mean *really cared*, truly wanted to couldn't I be that wonderful person who would be admired and approved of by everyone? Maintain the image and you too can be considered a great kid.

N: Do you believe that's what required for approval?

K: Yeah sure. Sure I do. It is.

N: Uh huh. Kim, who is "everyone?"

K: Everyone is everyone. Parents, friends, teachers, my boss. No. I don't believe that. It's crazy. But still that they would love me.

N: Who would love you then?

K: I don't know.

N: Who are you thinking of right at this moment?

K: Oh well - my mom and dad. I know they love me.

N: Was there ever a time when you felt perhaps you *had* to be super kid to win their love?

K: No - I don't know.

N: Kim, what would happen if you saw yourself as an ordinary human being?

K: What do you mean?

N: Oh pretty decent, usually competent, who like everybody else feels overwhelmed from time to time, plays the fool, gets duped, wins a few, tries again... just ordinary.

K: I would feel ashamed of mediocrity. Guilty of imperfection.

N: Well we both know there ain't no perfect peoples. But does ordinary mean mediocre?

K: I hate that word - ordinary. I want to be extraordinary.

N: So let me see if I get what you're saying. If you are extraordinary your mom and dad will love and approve of you more?

K: Well they will be happier. They are happy when I am achieving.

N: So you are responsible for their happiness?

K: Yeah I guess in a way. Weird - I never thought of it that way but yeah I do believe that.

N: Well you're not alone in that one. But you can only be responsible for yourself. You can't be genuinely yourself while trying to be responsible for others' happiness. Your parents are each responsible for their own happiness.

What would it be like to be free to do what *you* want - to goof off, to take it easy whenever you wanted, rather than doing what you should - what your dad, your teachers, your friends expect of you? And having to do it all to the point of melt-down?

K: I can't imagine it actually. Nell I've always been a goody two-shoes, an overachiever. You know that. It's my identity. I don't have an identity beyond that. If I'm not striving for perfection in everything what else is there? I'm not that smart, I'm average. I'm not an athlete, a poet, an allstar. I'm just totally

blah. I'm not really extraordinary in anything except that I try in extraordinary ways and I intend to keep that up - as soon as I am able. I just need a breather.

N: Kim I'm really concerned for you. This perfectionism thing can be a really dangerous obsession cause I know how depressed you get, and that you have thought about suicide on occasion. I want you to see a counsellor. Kim, this is serious, it needs attention. Will you let me help you? I could help you find a good therapist.

K: Look I admit to perfectionism but I really see that more as a compliment than a problem.. And besides I can't see a therapist - it would totally freak my parents.

N: So don't invite them along - this is for you!

K: NO!

N: OK would you agree to go with me to see the school counsellor - she really likes you. Totally confidential - I'll go and wait for you if you like.

K: Then will ya get off my back? OK.

Authentic people attempt to integrate their thinking, feeling and acting and take responsibility for their freedom and obligations. Kim comes close then backs away. She has been operating within a very constricted "given" framework. Within it there is no end to striving. She must get everything just right instead of simply doing as well as she can. She can only feel good when she is pursuing perfection in her schoolwork, her duties, her relationships, even her play. One false move and she feels like a failure. She is exhausted. She has spent a good portion of her life performing so others will approve of her. She doesn't know what she has it in her to do because she has avoided responsibility for her self - hiding instead behind her hopes that others' approval will give her a lasting sense of purpose, worth and value. Through the peer counselling interaction Kim *begins* to examine some of her beliefs. For example, that by maintaining a super kid image she can win the acceptance and approval of others, that she is

responsible for her parents' happiness through her achievements, that perfectionism is much more an asset than a liability. She has *begun* to reflect on her personality and demonstrates a degree of self awareness. But there are still elements of denial and self deception - her self defeating beliefs appear right to her, she does not know how to judge those fairly in terms of how they feel to her - likely as though she is constantly settling for too little, not trying for too much. Until she feels safe enough to face the hidden aspects of who she is and face her habitual dispositions that regulate her life unconsciously she cannot uncover and access her care structure, cannot take full responsibility for her freedom and obligations. Until Kim faces her habitual disposition towards perfectionism and workaholism as a means of pleasing others (while neglecting her own self concerns) she cannot find authenticity because implicit in this authenticity is a self-acceptance. That self acceptance, made in full recognition of the ordinary and the extraordinary, the stumbler and the dancing, the winged and the groveler, is the key to allowing authenticity. If Kim does choose to enter into that awareness then her personal freedom will expand. She'll be free to discover within herself what her 'care' is wanting to create, to express, to animate, to experience, to give. Secondly, and equally importantly, she will come to understand that essential to being authentic (and in this, extraordinarily and uniquely herself) is a reciprocity of being which means taking responsibility for herself and simultaneously allowing others (in her case parents, friends, teachers) to be responsible for *their* freedom and obligations. The peer counsellor acts as catalyst, referent, support.

A third way a peer counsellor might help **promote** authenticity, through clarification of value and belief frameworks, is by dialoguing with a counsellee who, through whatever means, has *already* achieved a good deal of personal authenticity. That is, an individual who has brought into reflective consciousness a realistic awareness of self, has clarity

about their beliefs and projects and has begun to recognize and embrace their personal responsibility for creating their life through their choices.

Kelly, for instance, chose in her grade 11 year to confront her eating disorder. She had been bulimic for five years. Bingeing and purging as often as ten times a day, she had nevertheless managed to keep her disorder a secret from family and friends and maintain her 'perfect image': honor roll student, jr. citizen of the year, drama club president, singer, actress, athlete. Her accomplishments eclipsed the personal pain she was repressing. When she could no longer suppress her secret she (supported by her family) sought professional therapy and over a year and a half worked diligently at recovery *and* kept up an ongoing dialogue with friend and peer counsellor Nell. Here's a segment of one of their last dialogues.

Kelly: I can't believe how far I've come this year. If it wasn't for you I might never have begun this journey. It was so hard to do.

Nell: Well I'm so impressed with the changes in you. It was kinda dark for awhile there - pretty scary. But man oh man have you ever lightened and learned heh? So summarize for me.

K: Ha. Well I realize how difficult, maybe even impossible it is to make real steps towards psychological recovery alone. Because unless someone points it out to you - you tend to be lost in your own faulty frameworks.

N: What does that mean for you?

K: My sick beliefs, my crazy non-working beliefs were too habituated. I truly could not bring them into consciousness nor see that they weren't healthy - that I was caged in them - on my own. And I see that I had to be *ready* to reveal myself to myself and to a therapist, and to you. Requires a great deal of trust and depth of communication. It took time.

- N: Yes I believe it takes a dialogue - another person, or at least another voice to help us uncover those core beliefs. And I understand now that eating disorders are so common yet a deeply rooted malaise - needing professional treatment.
- K: Oh definitely. You and I have talked a lot about how the media, our popular culture, our society's expectations for women play such a big part in encouraging eating disorders but ultimately the responsibility for my choice to be bulimic was mine. And family expectations play a significant role in creating faulty frameworks but ultimately it's only and solely a personal choice. Only I can make the choice to recover too - day by day.
- N: Day by day.
Our freedom and our responsibility are radical concepts.
- K: Yeah. I've felt that way most of my life - my parents have instilled that in me and I'm grateful for that. I've learned this year that while I thought I was totally self accountable that I'm not. I haven't been. Maybe no one is totally.
- N: Can you give me an example?
- K: Well I mean that while I have a high level of personal autonomy that doesn't mean I have no need for others' In fact in order to maintain my own true autonomy I must rely on others in some sense to help me stay true and honest to myself. We need each other to help us stay clear. I remember when the therapist asked me: "What is happiness for you Shelly?" After some nice lies I came out with my truth. Happiness is weighing 100 lbs. I can't be happy at 130 or 120 or 110 only 100 lbs. I had no conscious knowledge that I believed that - once I actually said it I knew it was true and also crazy. But it took me a lot more months of talking with the doctor to accept that weight has nothing to do with happiness. For instance that you Nelly don't equate your happiness with being thin . I kinda figured most women did.
- N: Those misconceived beliefs can be stubborn.

K: Yeah they are crazy but they sound sane to their owner because they've been reinforced so well. When beliefs stay locked up in secret they may be warped and unhealthy. So in that sense no one can act solely as an independent agent. We need otherness. Anyway the doctor asked me what I gained by holding this belief and over time I realized it was a defense against pain and a defense against being responsible for my own happiness. I can't be happy at 120 lbs. so I can avoid it and blame all my shit, all my confusion, emotional yuck and all my despairs on one thing. Being FAT.

N: Uh huh, that was when you and I started really looking at the other events and relationships in your life that caused you pain and how you tried to vomit that out of you.

K: Yeah. That "100 lbs equals happiness and perfection and self-worth for Kelly" well remember I told you I thought that was a way I was "self-referencing" and it is but I see that as false too now.

N: How so?

K: Well again I wasn't being responsible for my life. It wasn't really "I'll love myself at 100 lbs." It was more like: "My friends will like me more if..." "Men will be more attracted to me if..." It was more a way of other-referencing.

N: Explain "other referencing" to me.

K: I think of it like this - when I'm using other's opinions, approval, acceptance as the gauge for how worthy I am - I'm avoiding being responsible for providing my own self worth. Anyway it's a protective mechanism - safer to blame my unhappiness on others than dig within to discover my own lack of self acceptance. Being that vulnerable and then connecting to your self - that really needy, longing-for-love self who is also really strong and really clear... well it's miraculous. Healing flows from there.

N: You're so much stronger for this aren't you.

- K: More realistic about my vulnerability and paradoxically because of that stronger.
- N: Good things have come from what seemed a curse.
- K: Yes - the best perhaps of all is that I know I want to counsel those with eating disorders when I finish my degree. I know from the "inside" how common they are. And how little help is available to treat them. And how insidious a disorder. And how deeply I care about doing this. Interestingly enough it's given me a direction that I've been looking for. It feels real right. I'm enthused, excited, passionate about this.
- N: I have learned so much from you. Thank you Kell.
- K: And thank you my friend.

In this dialogue the peer counsellor helps promote an already growing authenticity by again listening and responding with openness and empathy and encouragement. Over time the counsellee has been helped to a position of radical responsibility through her work with a therapist but finds it useful and helpful to dialogue with the peer counsellor as a way of gelling her thoughts - working through her insights - discovering what her revelations mean to her personally and thus how they will be part of her daily life in recovery.

Nell has acted as a sort of 'talking journal' for Kelly to express and deepen her awareness. Nell's services are free, there are no time limits, the friendship carries special trust and there is an added degree of mutuality - of age and gender understanding, shared experiences and a growing learning of each from each. These are things a professional therapist does not offer but may be significant factors in creating the environment of trust, safety and caring so helpful in a move towards authenticity.

When we experience crisis we may initially feel that life is not what we thought it was. Suddenly nothing makes sense anymore: we feel angry, frustrated, uncertain, nakedly vulnerable to the rawness of life without our usual defenses. Yet this a passage of

import. When that which is genuine, self-originated and self-assumed from our care, replaces what we had counterfeited we move to a greater awakening.

To review: facets of authenticity are demonstrated in a) genuine assessment of our emotional responses, b) taking responsibility: for our circumstances, our freedom of choice, our obligations, our language, and c) honestly and openly reflecting on our beliefs and our personality without self deception. These may all be fostered or promoted in peer counselling interactions specifically aided by the use of empathic listening and expressing, questioning, articulating, and clarifying. One further aspect of authenticity involves poesis - that *creative making* that arises when we choose our projects from our care structure - when we *be* what we have it in us to *be*. It is through this aspect that we thus express and continually expand our possibilities.

Decision Making and Poesis

The scenarios recollected here thus far have focused on crisis, problems of a serious nature. They illustrate the dynamics of inauthenticity and the movement towards authenticity. They demonstrate the capability of a qualified peer counsellor to aid others in this movement. But of course it does not *require* a crisis to choose to be authentic. Indeed it is not usually the momentous but rather the moment by moment choices of a daily life that determine our authenticity. The peer counsellor can be most useful and effective by simply being available in a natural and spontaneous way in just those moments.

For example, Jamie is suffering from a lapse into a teenage version of fallenness - a spell of apathy and cynicism about his school work. Nell is in class with him.

Nell: How's your final project going?

Jamie: It's not.

N: What seems to be the problem?

J: I don't wanna do this. It sucks. I'm not interested. I can't think of anything. I got started on it and just fizzled.

N: What *were* you doing?

J: Well geez she wants us to research a topic, make a presentation to the class, *and* write a letter expressing concerns or approval for some aspect of it. Gawd! doesn't she think we have a life?

N: I think she wanted us to research some aspect *of* our life - something we *care* about.

J: Well I don't give a hoot about "Aid to Small Farmers".

N: Is *that* what you were doing? Well no wonder - you're not interested in that. No wonder it flopped.

J: I thought it was a good topic.

N: It is but you don't *care* about that.

Look answer me this. What did you do this year that made you feel most alive? ... besides that.

J: OK. Fishing. Fly fishing with my old man.

N: Why not write about that?

J: Nah, there's nothing to say - you just gotta do it.

N: Are there concerns about pollution of rivers or fishing regulations or something?

J: No it's just fun. It's zen. It's one with the river and life. It's a metaphor. It's real school.

N: You've been doing this for how long?

J: Since I was four. It's in my blood.

N: Excellent. You have all kinds of expertise about fly fishing don't you.

J: Well I'm no expert.

N: Yes I think you are. Like what kinds of fish are you after?

J: Brookies, Dollies, big Rainbows, feisty little Cutthroats.

N: Where do you find them?

J: Where the fast water meets the slow....

N: Sounds like some kinda Japanese koan.

J: Yeah

N: How about bait?

J: Bait? You dont use bait to fly fish - we're talking art. We're talkin hatches, Wooly Buggers, Golden Deer Nymphs...

N: How romantic. You love this don't you?

J: Wish I was there right now. I know a perfect pool way up on the Old Man.

N: I thought they dammed that.

J: Yeah those gawd dammers.

N: What actual impact is that going to have on your fishing hole?

J: I don't know. Maybe I should find out... But geez with all this talk about the environment, people are turning off. The class doesn't wanna hear a bunch of depressing facts and boring data.

N: Then how could you present what you love in a way that captures that?

J: Yeah if I could pull people into the experience - the sensory pull of it and make them catch it as well as present some fish fact and river lore as my research then maybe it would personalize the loss of river habitat. It might be an effective way to write a letter too.

Nell you're beautiful - I've gotta get going on this. See ya.

If a peer counsellor understands one simple concept; that we are authentic when we are doing what we love to do, then they may move a counsellee towards poesis through sequential decision making and problem solving. Again the counselee ultimately directs the solution and makes choices based on their own expertise, based on their care structure. Sometimes all that's needed in a move towards authenticity is someone to

allow us the space to remember what it is we most care about. Certainly this requires a measure of self knowledge but more than that a peer counselor can give a counselee an affirmation that what matters to them, their bliss, is worthy of investigation, support, nurturance, and declaration. That when they are doing what they most care about they will be fulfilling their most latent potential and growing in the directions they are naturally inclined towards. This is authentic. Jamie has no enthusiasm for the work that lies outside his own experience or his care, but when reconnected to what he does know and does love his excitement carries him quickly into brainstorming, planning and executing. So it is with our projects. When we struggle and sink under the weight of projects we feel we *should* do rather than direct our energies to discover what we *want* to do and feel passionate about, we cut off our creative impulse and turn pleasure into pain. What we work at with authentic passion will succeed. When we are doing what we have it in us to do we are connecting to a greater whole.

When teenagers are forced to relegate their studies to realms consistently unrelated to their own interests and experiences they are cut off from their care structures. Such alienation inevitably results in apathy, cynicism, boredom, rebellion. If alienated long enough, one's care structure seems difficult to access. Many adolescents seem not to know what they care about, nor what matters to them beyond sensation, gratification, perhaps because they have been denied accessing and building on their own authentic dispositions. Then learning turns to drudgery - robotic exercises performed for a grade rather than an exploration of what one has it in them to be rather than a flowering forth of one's unique potential and possibility.

Conclusions

What becomes evident in these transcripts of dialogue is the kind of authenticity that this thesis addresses. It is paradoxical: no matter how close we get to other people we still face life alone and must face the basic issues of our lives through the choices we

make. Simultaneously we all exist within a web of deep intersubjectivity, an interdependence that requires a constant play between detachment (attained through personal autonomy and choice) and attachment (attained through intimacy and empathy). As delineated in Chapter 3, we pursue authentic self-fulfillment by choosing with ultimate respect for our unique framework of significance. Nevertheless, that framework *includes* our relationships and in that sense we authenticate ourselves through our relationships. This paradox is the silent partner in peer counselling interactions. To learn that we must take ultimate responsibility for the way we live our lives no matter how much guidance and support we get from others is both frightening and exhilarating. Indeed the awareness of our ultimate aloneness can be terrifying. We may use all manner of diversions to attempt to avoid this, yet it seems that if this half of the human experience (apartness) is cut off we are not truly able to experience the other half (a part of) which is intimacy.

Many people consider themselves enslaved by others, events, and circumstances. Many people want someone else to free them. Most of us have sought directions, answers, values, beliefs, validation from the important people in our world. Rather than trusting ourselves to search within and find our own answers, our own validation, we sell out by giving over to someone else. We look then to what others expect of us.

Adolescence in particular is a time of searching for an internal authority, an authentic identity, but few adolescents are conscious of this and may soon root their being in someone or something other than themselves. Peer counselling offers one avenue by which to return to themselves. It presents no guarantees, but to offer others opportunities to explore and define their own options and to respect their choices and expertise is to imply a faith in their potential to cope authentically with life.

These notions of authenticity and the skills and learning of peer counselling must have personal relevance to be of meaning. How they materialize in my pedagogy is my final consideration.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY

It becomes increasingly clear to me that for anyone, the desire to live authentically creates an immediate and life-long challenge and learning. To consciously, consistently seek to make autonomous informed choices in each moment and to strive to create, through one's projects and intentions, the ground of one's Being, requires more than intellectual acuity or physical stamina. It requires great courage - to struggle against unthinking submergence in the way things are, and to choose in awareness each time a ready-made standardized scheme is presented. It requires superior strength and balance to evoke critical awareness and to question, yet hold oneself within a balance of paradoxes. It requires a will and a willingness born out of passionate commitment to freedom and responsibility. But more importantly if authenticity is to be employed as a loving-mode-of-being in the world, each person must choose from the depth of their care and be conscious of what governs their choices. I advocate Peer Counselling training as a means for adolescents to open to an understanding of authenticity because it provides direct experience in creative, caring, relational choice-making. For it is just as likely and perhaps much easier to be authentically miserable, to decide for despair rather than joy, to use one's uniqueness to achieve "power over" rather than a "dwelling with."

Authenticity is necessary in teaching because I concur with Rogers (1951) that **authenticity, acceptance** in the form of positive regard, and **empathy**, are the three essential characteristics for any effective helper or facilitator. Authenticity, however can not be achieved just through the acquisition of a set of 'skills' or through the accumulation of theory. Just as our educational problems cannot be resolved just through better teaching and learning techniques but only by including the willingness to seek what I call authentic wisdom. By that I mean a spiritual authenticity that

implicates us in the whole circle of life. This authenticity wraps the knower and the known in a bond of responsibility that requires involvement, mutuality, accountability. We cannot continue to pretend that mastery of facts and manipulation of data, people, species, places us in dominion. This kind of objectivism has brought us to the brink of annihilation. Nor do I advocate the equally dangerous all-encompassing subjectivism which I compare to Sartre's notion of authenticity wherein the individual throws himself at a choice by exclaiming "I'll *do* what I *want*." For reality is not just "out there" but neither is it just "in here", a truth which consists only of private perceptions, needs and beliefs. I believe we find our authenticity not in the fine points of philosophy, or theology, or ideology but in our relationships with each other and the whole of creation. I mean that our relationship with self and other is what grants us the choices, the opportunity for congruence that is authenticity. Peer Counseling training, because of its focus on more genuine self-accountable relations, on more open, communicative and caring relations is a kind of education that *promotes* authentic wisdom both in its methodology and its content.

Why Authenticity in Education?

Authenticity (from the Greek word *authentis* meaning "to author") is linked with knowing our truth - what our genuineness would "author". In other words, to know what is genuine within us, to know what our care structure calls us to do, is to know what our best choices are guided by and towards. "Knowing" in schools today is an inert and lifeless thing; a knowledge to be tracked down, swallowed and later regurgitated. It is a kind of spectator sport - guided by procedural rules of knowing: research, report and confirm.

"At best the classroom is a platform from which we view some subject - at worst we sit in the farthest reaches of the stadium. Therein teacher is

active, student is passive, and both teachers and students are manipulators of knowledge, not genuine cocreators of knowing " (Palmer, 1983).

If I want to change this context I must initiate and seek to sustain what Buber called authentic "I-Thou" relationships with and amongst students. By listening, questioning, providing experiences, and suggesting models for restructuring thought and choice I can help students examine themselves, find their authentic wisdom, claim it and live it more fully. This means of course that it is also essential for me to 'create a space' in my classroom for reflection. A space using the creative receptivity of contemplative silence; a compassionate listening wherein we are receptive to ourselves, our authentic voices and all those who have been silenced (whether by race, economics, political choice or sexual orientation). Quaker theologian and philosopher Parker Palmer writes:

"How often my words in the classroom are uttered to fill a space rather than to open it up. I speak to solve problems for people, to give them definitive answers to their questions, to prove my authority or relieve a moment of tension. I forget that tension can be creative - fail to let it draw me into a learning space. I do not allow my students' problems and questions to deepen within them, to do their own educative work. Genuine solutions, authentic answers, can only come from within my students -my words and my silence should draw out their truth rather than impose my own."
(Palmer, 1983, 97)

As a further consideration I must not operate out of a simplistic desire to *authenticate* my students - this is more objectivist manipulation. Rather I must let go of control and engage with them in a dialogic investigation of themselves, their beliefs and thoughts and questions. Herein I espouse Heidegger's notion of authenticity wherein the chooser evaluates and declares, "I will do what I *care* about." In order for my students to access

what they care about I must first effectively create an acceptance of their stories, then listen, question, listen more, connect to a larger context and create a challenge. I must be willing to accept their final choices too, knowing they may not be what I would wish. This is not an easy task! This is the hardest task for I must become masterful at spinning and weaving with speaking and listening - the warp and weft of authentic revelation.

All those who have been 'marginalized', and I think finally this includes all of us, understand the ways in which society erodes our belief in ourselves. It whittles away our sense of validity and the ascendancy of our authentic self. It happens overtly, it happens subtly, this tearing and wearing away of our self worth. Our thoughts and feelings are consistently ignored, repressed, or revoked by those we are conditioned to regard as authorities or simply 'in charge' and we grow to feel uncertain. This unworthiness is a precondition for muting our own voice, even silencing it. And it is that voice, that free and evaluated articulacy that is essential to authenticity. It's not that authenticity and subordination are totally incompatible. It's been my experience that one may still make authentic choices within the confines of a subordinated role but certainly these states are not complimentary. Students are expected to be subordinate. Adolescents are caught in a double bind, still considered children; expected to be obedient and submissive and yet accept responsibilities of the adult world.

Just as I have witnessed teachers, enrolled in curriculum courses, revelling in the opportunity to discuss real life scenarios, so students come alive and begin to take real meaning from class activity and talk when they discuss *their* real life situations, and are listened to without condemnation or preconditions. This is such an obvious insight one marvels at why it takes teachers so long to trust in this process. Perhaps because we are not taught through our own educational experiences, teacher training is only now

beginning to move in this direction, and we have lamentably few 'skills' to draw on that would enable us to switch roles from lecturer, evaluator, expert, guard - to nurturer, facilitator, birther, guide.

When I began teaching I came face to face with my most personal and most of my professional anxieties and insecurities - as beginning teachers do. In attempting to deal with those, and from a lack of knowing how to do it differently, I tried to hide behind my role, my position - wanting respect for *who* I was but instead demanding respect for *what* I represented. I knew I couldn't just *impose* myself on students - yet I did. Later I tried to *co-exist* with students but this was not what was 'real' either. I tried too hard, sometimes being too pushy, other times too passive. Usually I went home frustrated, great expectations - few excitations. The fact was I was not revealing my authentic self. I was not entering into real relationship with them. The level of trust was low, the level of manipulation was high. Anyone who has taught secondary grades knows that this is a mutually exclusive experience. I trusted them as little as they I - they manipulated me just as much as I them. Partly it is so because teachers often don't feel trusting enough to develop reciprocal trust and rapport with students, and partly it is so because our cultural tradition teaches us to condone the objective and neutral and condemn the political and personal.

Bringing Authenticity into Education Through Curriculum and Peer Counselling

Through the methods and content of Peer Counselling training and the existential encounter described in Chapter One I have begun to change my stance towards students. This may occur as a natural evolution of any teaching - I suspect good teachers, intent on growth and truly serving their students, inevitably progress in this direction but certainly these particular experiences hastened *my* process.

It wasn't my first revelation but I think my most significant - that the most important thing a teacher can do to help foster a student's authentic being is to accord real respect to the knowledge that emerges from first-hand experience. And the first obstacle to that accord is the uncertainty, scepticism and doubt that students feel towards the validity of their own experiences and own knowing. Its evident in their timidity, their reluctance to reveal and their blankness when asked to recall experiences or name their feelings and reactions to material. They are afraid to take those risks. They have been, as most of us have, systematically conditioned to accept that they know less and are therefore in an inferior subordinate role. They are expected to be obedient, silent for long periods, dutiful to the demands placed on them and respectful of teacher authority. They are expected to look to the teacher's knowledge as, at least, *entitling* knowledge. To learn the teacher's knowledge entitles the student to pass the grade. They have never learned to trust their own authority, at least not in a classroom setting, and they typically regard their experiences as just something that happens *to* them not *because* of them. What so many of my students need is confirmation that they can trust themselves to know and to learn. They do not need or wish to be told they have the *potential*, the *capacity* to become authenticated, to become wise. They need to know that they *already* know - that there is that which is great, wise, artful, creative, giftlike, divine inside them now. My task as teacher, as fellow being, is to help them remove the barriers to that expression; and to present a model of one who is striving to live an authentic life.

In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, (Belenky et al. 1986) many women expressed - some firmly, some shakily - a belief that they possessed latent knowledge. And the kind of teacher they praised and the kind for which they yearned was one who would help them articulate and expand their latent knowledge. These teachers Belenkey calls 'midwife teachers.' They assist students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it. They do not anaesthetize their students - they do

not usurp the student's responsibility and choices in order to do their thinking for them. Rather they support their students' birthing of authentic wisdom. The learners' fragile newborn thoughts are often the most authentic, they emerge from the truth of their deepest being. Thus the midwife's next concern is to see these authentic thoughts are protected and nurtured, that they do not turn into acceptable lies. (Here is the inexorable push towards inauthenticity - the safe and comfortable complacency of the 'given' - that fails to pull the individual into an authentic caring relationship with the world, with the whole circle of life.) The authentic teacher must now refrain from telling the student to replace their thought with a different (more sophisticated) thought, but only to encourage them to let their thought grow, to live with it for awhile.

Each of these stages of birthing requires certain things. The birthing requires careful and attentive questioning and empathic listening. Empathic listening in which the teacher 'feels with' the student. Just as in any birth this process can be drawn out, frustrating, painful. It requires patience and real faith; a certainty of belief in the goodness and worthiness of the student's emergent knowing, in their subjective expertise. So few of us have been nurtured in this way ourselves, we must *learn* how to give it to others. I began to learn it in Peer Counselling training.

Classrooms aren't often suitable places to give birth; to labor for an authentic response, to discover, to disclose what we really care about. We are educated to advocate, (in our supposed neutrality), repression, even denial of the authentic, intuiting, feeling self and assertion of the institutional, rational, thinking self. Most of us are conditioned so as not to seriously find out what we want. When we don't know what we want we can't desire it. If we do not know and do not care we can avoid the effort and the risks involved in getting it. For all of us the attempt at authenticity requires a clear, direct risk. To act and react out of our own being is to fly in the face of our appointed definition and

prescribed way of living. It means risking wrath and abandonment. The wrath of the dominant order, the abandonment of those who simultaneously support and confine us. When we discover that this is so, often our first (authentic) reaction is anger. Anger at having been so manipulated, so self-alienated.

And so the starting point for any learning/teaching must be the response of the learner to the 'text' and this response must be that of a unique, sentient human being - not as a *student*. This becomes real to me as I begin to stop being dismayed or annoyed when my students do not experience material as I do. The following vignette recalls the attitudes I initially had to student reaction.

We had just completed Alice Munro's short story "Boys and Girls" and watched a complimenting NFB film of the story. It was, and is, one of my favorite English 30 stories - it speaks so clearly and evocatively of the experience of 'just a girl' as she moves into her appointed role as a young woman in a rural community. I was happy and expectant that a lively discussion would follow. This was a bright and articulate bunch and besides the majority of the class was female. But when the lights went on all I saw were sullen faces and averted eyes.

"Well, what did you think?" I asked.

Silence, no eye contact.

"Does that mean you were offended or insulted or bored to death or nonplussed or what?"

Silence.

"Hmmm - do you need some time to digest before we talk? How about writing for 10 minutes on this question, 'What were the caged foxes symbolic of and why does the girl cry at the end? Are these two details related in any way?'"

After some silent shuffling, and scribbling one fellow raised his hand.

"Ah - hah - now we're cooking..." I thought, gratefully acknowledging him.

"Personally I hate this story - you *always* pick stories where the main character is a girl. I can't relate to that. It's stupid. I thought this story stunk and I can't

begin to guess what the foxes are a symbol of." He sneered and settled back, his friends sneered too.

I waited a moment. I looked in surprise around the room. Suddenly all eyes *are* on me and challenging too it seems. "Anybody else want to voice an opinion?" And to my real dismay most of the girls in the room agreed that they didn't like stories about girls, "They weren't very interesting" and that *this* protagonist had better accept her role if she wanted to be accepted by the farm community - she would have to 'shape up' sooner or later. They didn't buy the symbolism of the foxes as representing a caged aspect of the girl and they despised her weak tears at the end.

It was a shock for me - granted I was teaching in a farming community but this was the end of the '80's! It was such a shock for me that I felt my only recourse was to *tell* them what I thought and why, (which only seemed to set them further in their resistance). I was never so grateful when that bell rang. I wanted only to be free of these people, their small minds, their narrow perceptions. I felt hopeless in the face of their set-in-concrete beliefs and stereotypes. The moment was lost - my momentum was lost. We never mentioned it again and I covered the remaining stories in a most superficial way. (And in a count that night 4 out of 10 stories covered had female protagonists).

These incidents were not unusual. They have the power to throw beginning teachers entirely off balance. I would feel adversarial and impotent to change, to teach, to 'enlighten' as I saw it. My reaction to this kind of 'threat' would be to commandeer 'cooperation' with the tasks that followed or simply ignore the groans, sighs, fidgets, moans and unruly behavior that ensued, grimly determined not to have my best-laid plans trompled and my at-best tentative control snatched away. Meanwhile I'd be frantically rationalizing the validity of the material, my interpretation of it, and the necessity of their compliance with my agenda. At home I'd weep over my utter failure to achieve my lofty ideals and vow to do it better - but how? When enough of these

experiences accumulate the teacher begins to numb, she *cares* less and finally *can't* care less.

But as I began to transfer the learning I was gleaming through the Peer Counselling training I began to change my perspective. If I was to listen with empathy then I would *want* to know how my students genuinely experienced my teaching and the material I used. I could not love my lessons possessively disallowing students their own opinions and interpretations. I may not, as a person, as a critic, agree with their interpretations but I needn't experience their reactions as a threat. Perhaps those reactions were neither good nor bad but simply 'there'.

At any rate I could not dismiss their responses to material or issues as not being what I wanted or wished for. And so, slowly, I began to accept their real reactions, be that interested, indifferent, excited or disgusted because I realized our genuine reactions to what we read, write, see - these are the essence of communication. That doesn't mean those initial reactions won't or can't change, grow, evolve or deteriorate - we *build* onto our primary response - but first we honor it. I want to trust that to enter into my students' subjective perspective, to listen empathically to their expressions and experiences is the way to help them give birth to perhaps something deeper, richer. Maybe a more authentic viewpoint. And maybe not. I return again and again to the truth that I cannot *teach* anyone to *be* authentic. I can only create an environment which is conducive and interact with an intention towards genuineness and existential freedom.

For example, within a year of beginning Peer Counseling training, I wanted to incorporate some lessons in listening, attending, and questioning into my English curriculum. Language Arts experts maintain that listening is one of five equally significant strands of the communication web but the only listening I was witness to was students listening to teachers. What about teachers giving fully focused listening to students, and students giving that to one another?

In my quest I came upon two recently released video's for adolescents on "Effective Communication". As well as the concepts we'd been discussing (concepts I took directly from Peer Counseling training) these incorporated a short form of transactional analysis and used role plays of teenagers interacting with their parents. I was quite pleased with the resource and its directness and relevance. I eagerly introduced them to my students.

They thought the tapes hilarious, ridiculous and idiotic! Reactions during the screening ranged from snorts of mockery to guffaws and groans. A few of the more thoughtful types seemed keen initially but had a hard time maintaining their own stance in the face of such opposition.

"What was wrong with this?" I asked and when they saw that I was genuinely, openly wanting to know and wasn't going to retaliate in some way, they searched for words to articulate their frustrations and scorn. What emerged once we went beyond the 'stupids', 'that sucked' and 'it was dumb' was, interestingly, a fundamental disbelief that such communication could really exist, much less be effective between teenagers and parents. They were sceptical that a teenager would be accorded any real regard in asking for a 'negotiation', in choosing an appropriate time and place to discuss their issues, in making a contractual type agreement, developing trust by following through... Mind you none of them would admit to having tried; a few felt it might work but none were going to assent to trying it in actuality. That was all right - once we had all views 'aired' I was then free to express my own response to the material (and I had to agree with some of their dissent) and to challenge them to "grow" their current thoughts, to abandon the inauthentic choices of just going along with the views of the highly verbal few in the class, to decide individually what they took as meaningful, to try it out, to thereby reconstruct and re-member their 'truths'.

But what was really required of me was a firm belief that each one of my pupils had valid experience and that they could and must be trusted to access that and make good choices for themselves.

I see now that the authenticity I was trying to foster in this case was students' ability to act on their own behalf and to build a sense of their own effectiveness. It did not mean that they shed their current state of development, the dependent or vulnerable aspects of themselves, in favor of a totally self sufficient, needless, heedless and free self but rather to merge the two.

When I reconstruct the prior example of "Boys and Girls" I know I would handle that scenario differently now. For one thing the longer a teacher teaches the more she hears dissenting views. Differences in values and beliefs become perhaps a little less immobilizing. But more significantly, I am more likely now to believe in my *own* strength which lies in speaking genuinely and truthfully from my perspective without defensiveness. In that sense I am more authentic more of the time. I see my role differently - not primarily as transmitter of data or even a manager of language aptitudes - not as expert, controller or definer. I see my real role in teaching as sensitizer. Sensitizing my students to the power, the beauty, the vitality, the deep emotionality of language, of word. And sensitizing them to the way words, wily words, are used to build ticky-tacky structures and ready-made schemes. Sensitizing my students to vulgarity, inhumanity, hypocrisy, incongruity. My role as sensitizer is to enable them to achieve critical awareness of 'acceptable lies', the status quo, the ways we regard "other": women, children, elders, non-whites, other species, the fragile planet. (Perhaps the best way in is through their own otherness as teenagers.)

In hindsight I see now that I had inadvertently set up a classroom situation where it was difficult for my students to remain comfortable. Yes, they resent that but I would now welcome such an opportunity, not run from it. This is the door that must be opened if we are to look at our choices and our compliance with the social reality that prevails.

Another aspect of the changes in my pedagogy as I move towards a greater degree of authenticity in my life is my own willingness to be simply *who I am*. This is not an easy nor a fearless choice because there are student, parent, community and professional expectations in place which prescribe how a teacher is to be. And I know well that those are not always who I am. When I began teaching I upheld the notion that came with my induction, that a teacher, as society shaper, role model and moral exemplar, is to be infinitely controlled, infinitely accommodating, infinitely patient and infinitely efficient. I am often addressed by students and parents and even sometimes by colleagues as if I had no mind, no body, no moods, no needs, no longings and no inner life. I am expected to uphold the status quo, however that is perceived in that community. I am not to have any loose ends, any doubts about the efficacy of schooling. I am not a conservatively groomed, modulated, unflappable, subject matter expert who sets up a predictable routine in the classroom that allows students to sink comfortably into their dutiful roles: notetaker, assignment completer, and homework sloucher, evaluated and secure in an appropriate grade. That temptation is always there and looks appealing on all those days when the tremendous effort required to be otherwise seems too much. But in succumbing to these expectations I become invisible to myself.

The exploration of existential thought and the plunge into theory that is graduate school has brought me back to myself. I realize that if I want my students to experience and explore their own states of bitter discontent (so ripe for choice and change) then I can not always be cool, analytical, rational, business-like, professional. My anger, my anguish, my boredom, are appropriate responses to an often insane world. My students need to know that out of our boredom with indifference, and suffering from our complacency and deadening of imagination, we rouse ourselves to make new choices. This also means subsequently that we must be willing to hear *their* anger, their frustration, their confusion.

For example one day after the students had left I overheard an angry voice in the hall and much slamming of books and locker door. I walked to my doorway and listened to this snippet:

F. I can't stand this school anymore! It doesn't mean anything! I'm bored, I'm pissed off and I hate this place! I wanna drop out! I'm going to!

J. So... wow what brought this on?

F. What didn't happen you mean. I had a run in with that dorkhead Math teacher. I got yelled at by the vice-principal, and lectured by the principal. "You'll have to accept more responsibility, more responsibility, more responsibility..." Apart from that I snored my way through yet another day. I'm just gonna get a job.

The two girls wandered away down the hall. A few moments later the Math teacher across the hall appeared at her door.

P. "Did you hear that?" she asked.

Me. "Yeah"

"You the dorkhead Math teacher?"

P. "Yep - that's me."

...Sigh

P. "I feel bad about that - but her behavior has turned into such a problem - every single day she has to leave the room to go to the washroom, make a phone call, if I say 'No' she's rude and nasty to me and the others for the rest of the class. If I say 'Yes' she takes 40 minutes and returns only when the bell rings to get her books. I've tried talking with her to no avail so today I called the principal to find her and have a talk with her.

M. "What do you think is the problem?"

P. "Oh well, obviously she doesn't want to be here. And I doubt that I can convince her otherwise. It's too bad cause she's really bright - she shouldn't even be in this group - she could do more advanced work easily. In fact... that gives me an idea.

The next day she had prepared to ask the student to stay after class but she was approached first:

F. Mrs. P. I want to drop this course - please sign my withdrawal.

P. O.K. I can do that but first tell me what you'll do instead?

F. I dunno - sleep in.

P. Well since you're going to drop this course it won't matter anyway - could you tell me why you were so unhappy here? That's not a loaded question - I just wonder what's going on for you?

- F. I dunno - I'm bored outta my mind in here - I don't wanna be in here with these fuzzheads.
- P. Is there something I could do to make it better?
- F. I doubt it.
- P. You know it's a shame, you have so many smarts - have you thought about taking a higher level Math course?
- F. I can't get into Math 13 - it's too late and it doesn't fit in my timetable.
- P. F. why did you register for this course anyhow?
- F. I dunno - I didn't do so good in Math last year. I can't do it...
- P. Is that why you're taking this course - you were scared you couldn't handle the other?
- F. Yeah - I guess. I dunno.
- P. Cause I think you can and certainly you'll need it if you want to go on to do Diploma Math in your final year. Look here's a suggestion - you can think about it and if you still want to drop this course tomorrow I'll sign your withdrawal. But first consider this - there's only a few students in here in this block - what if I got the correspondence course for the higher Math and you could use this period

to work on your own - if you need help I'll be here and then you can go on to do what you really want. Maybe that would be a choice that would be good to you.

F. Well, I'll think about it....

That's what they did and it worked perfectly! The absences and excuses vanished, she was one miracle of immediate transformation. Capable, diligent, and independent she became such an ally that when she finished her own lessons for the day she worked with other students. We grew to have so much respect for her, but more importantly she grew in self confidence and her belief in the power of making authentic choices was at least nurtured.

I realize this places a responsibility on me to walk the tightrope (and it is a delicate balancing) between *imposing* my principles, values and morals (or imposing those of the 'system') and leaving my students entirely alone and adrift to choose as they may; influenced by other's beliefs, their intuition, feelings, fears, current norms, ideals or convenience - whichever has the most convincing voice in the moment. I understand in a more clearly informed way something I performed rather intuitively before - that the existentialist teacher must decide *what* should govern her choices and awaken students to what governs theirs. Is it protocol? Procedures? Ease? Others? Principles? No one can please all parties so a direction must be chosen. For me it is one which first embraces and honors my self and then seeks to transcend self. I must initiate my students to their authentic being, guide them through the nether world of their disenchantment and dare to bring them out the other side to see the possibility of the lovely, the beautiful, the life affirming, the right, the higher, the compassionate, the way of dignity, integrity, peace. And of course I don't always know what that is - they must help me along my way as well.

Another change in my pedagogy as authenticity is given priority is that I have increasingly disavowed much of the structured curricular material and embellished or even sometimes replaced it with what I consider to be more authentic materials and activities. An activity is authentic for people when they feel emotionally involved and mentally stimulated, when they are aware of choices and have the freedom to make decisions, when they feel they have something to bring to the activity and that its outcome may be important to their everyday life. When it has the quality of 'life' - not just 'life-like'. I don't do *pretend* activities anymore, wherein we pretend to write a letter, pretend to voice an opinion to an editor or pretend to respond to literature using a form that's meant only for the teacher and not for their peers. I want their activities to be based in their own everyday reality, to be 'signed, sealed and delivered' in actuality. I want them to write for a real audience, an audience of peers and of those in decision-making roles in their community - those people whose opinions they *really* care about. When I use authentic materials and activities relationships actually develop among their thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Connections occur! The internal organization of 'the way things are' is reorganized.

An activity is *not* authentic if people cannot imagine themselves or anyone they identify with actually doing that; if they feel that their personal reasons and their own being are irrelevant, or that their participation is mostly just to remove a threat, to placate some real or imagined authority. The worst texts, the worst teaching is that which separates the teacher's language and theirs, the teacher's culture from theirs - it sets up a one-way communication. If you keep teens' cultural reality separated from the classroom you are irrelevant!

Another aspect of my evolving teaching that helps promote authenticity is choice. I incorporate more and more choice into my curriculum. Adolescents in general don't often

realize they *have* vast choice. They don't perceive being in school as a choice or that the choices they have made are now creating a reality around them. Many of my really disenfranchised students feel they have no choice whatsoever. I want them, at least in the limited sphere of my classroom, to choose as often as possible, and with as much latitude as possible, what they read, write, watch, and how to experience and play with the material. I increasingly have them devise the means of experience and choose their evaluation. They evaluate themselves at times. I want them to have the choice to develop an authentic personal response to whatever we're studying. And in my role as 'curriculum comptroller' I try to choose materials which are poignantly, intensely relevant to *their* world, to the contexts of adolescents in other cultures, and to our shared reality, our shared and finite planet.

The Peer Counselling training was the avenue by which I gained access to their world. It is perhaps not accessible through the classroom, at least not initially.

For instance, through peer training I have gained insight into students' life situations and allowed them insight into mine. I thus have been allowed to explore some of their cultural context - how they live on a daily basis, what they fear and what they long for. I hear their language, their idioms, their referential points and places. I awaken to their preoccupations, their problems and their principles. I am constantly amazed at the depth of communication and the maturity and insight they possess with regard to their interpersonal relations. It seems *much* more sagacious than I recall from my adolescence. And each training session I realize anew the powerful limits that lack of self esteem places on achieving authenticity. But perhaps the biggest boon for me is that I am required to listen long enough to hear students' real questions. Like the rest of us, they often *don't* know what their questions are but they do know that there is something within - begging to be voiced. The training often provides their first experience in

questing themselves. My role may be then to voice the question and to reassure them that they have answers that can be as valid as any other's.

It is not easy! Especially within the framework of a long established tradition that upholds the values of the dominant social order. It is tough because institutions themselves teach by virtue of what they *are*. But institutions are but projections of what goes on in the human heart. To ignore the inward sources of our educational dilemmas is only to once again objectify the problem.

It is not easy because teachers who have tried more participatory modes of teaching know that students become skittish and cynical when responsibility is first placed with them. They complain the teacher is not doing their job. They can be uncooperative, lazy, unenthused, uncertain. They do not want to engage in personal examination - and often their parents do not want them to either.

It is not easy because teachers often wish to remain distanced, separated from themselves in the classroom and from their students. That distance gives teachers power and with power comes security; the security of controlling the class agenda, avoiding serious challenges to one's authority, evading the embarrassment of getting lost in uncertain territory. Authenticity demands that the teacher become more interested in promoting learning than performing teaching. Its harder this way! But I think we learn more from imperfect people who are actively and intelligently taking risks with their thoughts and lives than from those who are so intent on appearing perfect that they fail to engage with us.

We all have the same needs for nourishment: movement, novelty, love, input, challenges. We all undergo the same quest, "Who am I?" - not as a 'given' but as a 'becoming'. That

quest is a struggle, in some situations our prospects are dashed, other times our hike towards what is worth working for falters, or our faith, our caring, suddenly seems inconsequential, or 'merely' subjective. But these struggles are actually what make the quest continue. We struggle to uphold the creative tension between being (what we are) and becoming (what we may be) in some kind of forward moving equilibrium. This is the move towards authenticity. I believe it is the first criterion all educational experience must meet.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX I
TRAINING CONTENT

Session 1	Confidentiality, Secrets, Getting Acquainted
Session 2	Attending Skills F.E.L.O.R.
Session 3	Roadblocks to Better Communication
Session 4	Listening
Session 5	Empathic Listening
Session 6	Paraphrasing in Empathy
Session 7	Facilitative Questioning
Session 8	Self-Responsible "I Messages"
Session 9	Effective Feedback - Giving and Receiving
Session 10	Values Clarification
Session 11	Decision-making, Problem-Solving Models
Session 12	Ethics, Referral
Session 13	Closure

SPECIAL NEEDS AREAS

Initiating a Therapeutic Relationship
Handling Silence
Behaviors You Don't Dig
Rejection
Specific Problem Areas (drugs, careers, parents)

PRACTICA AREAS

Application Concerns
Refreshers and Workshops in Core Areas
Guest Speakers
Outreach in the School and Community

Adapted from Figure by Rey A. Carr, Peer Counseling Project, University of Victoria,
B.C. in "Theory and Practice of Peer Counseling", 1981.

APPENDIX II

TRAINING PROCESS

CONTINUITY: Old business, sharing, concerns, homework discussion

AWARENESS: Description/direction: rationale, purpose, ability, 'self-calibration',
declaration of need, , personal frame of reference

KNOW-HOW: Presentation by lecturette, brainstorming, visuals, formulas, role play,
modelling

EXPERIENCE: Role plays, simulations, exercises in pairs, trios or small groups

SYNTHESIS: Debriefing, observer feedback, experience inquiry, integration,
summarization

PRACTICE: Homework assignments

CONTINUITY.....

Adapted from Figure by Rey A. Carr, Peer Counseling Project, University of Victoria,
B.C. in "Theory and Practice of Peer Counseling" 1981.

APPENDIX III

TRAINING

INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK

MUTUALLY DECIDED ASSIGNMENTS

OUTREACH ALERT

ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS

GROUP ACTIVITIES

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

team sports

peer training

community involvement

recreation and

team building

ONE-ON-ONE REFERRALS

by teachers and by counsellors

SELECT FOCUS GROUPS

divorce

children of alcoholics

drugs and alcohol

SUPERVISED WEEKLY MEETINGS

Adapted from Figure by Rey A. Carr, Peer Counseling Project, University of Victoria,

B.C. in "Theory and Practice of Peer Counseling", 1981.