

now. But that's not necessary. I know most of the answers myself. I merely have to see 'what is'. The answers are in 'what is'.

When I forgive someone for bad behaviour is it because I need to forgive myself for my own bad behaviour, always assuming, that 'bad' means anything at all? When I make excuses for someone else am I really making excuses for myself? Conversely, when I am unforgiving, am I seeing something in myself that I cannot forgive, the projectively despised part of myself that I have repressed or refuse to see? I don't ask these questions any more, because, I know that the answer, in almost every case, is yes.

Other people's problems are my own. By helping to change others I am helping myself; by changing myself I change others. You are you because (not *and*) I am I, and vice versa. The whole and the parts, society and the individual, are mutually supportive - or, as John Bennett put it, they are held together by 'reciprocal maintenance'. It is not possible to become a person except in a community of persons, just as it is not possible for a heart to be a heart without all the other organs and veins and arteries and cells and so on that make up the human body; but a heart is not a lung.

Hans Lobstein

Group work and community involvement

Community Development is part of a scheme of tapping local community resources and to that extent is a more intriguing aspect of voluntary work. It can be part of a programme to shift the emphasis from the pressures of emergency and crisis work to preventive social work. Group work training helps in this programme.

The group work has two concomitant aims. Firstly to get to know ourselves better. Our own motives and predilections, and secondly to become more community and group oriented. An active and involved community is a happy community to that extent.

On April 4th the first such study day took place in Ealing for trainee social workers. It took time to break down the initial scepticism of those taking part (*'What is all this about? We know all we want to know about group work, etc'*). but by midday the first tentative sparks were struck. (*'We want to do something different. We want to take more risks to learn about each other. We want to learn our aggressive feelings and what to do about them. We want to have more choice . . .'*). By the end of the day we had experienced a great deal of honesty and a new acceptance of each other. A small beginning which hopefully may lead to more.

How can group work training help social workers appreciate the hidden untapped resources of the community? One very simple exercise might be role exchange or role reversal. 'If I know what it feels like to be you I have a much better understanding of

how you operate, what needs and resources you may have, what I may expect from you; and I can start thinking of suitable ways of meeting those needs or making use of those resources. A lot of my training as a social worker has been concerned with your needs and to help find ways of meeting them, but comparatively little has been done to teach me find ways of mobilising your resources’.

How can community workers help make better case work? One simple example: Father, mother and four children. Father has had an accident and lost his job as a lorry driver. This was two years ago. They then got into financial difficulties and rent arrears. This was eventually paid for them by the social services rather than break up the family. But now they are back in even deeper arrears and so the story repeats itself. The rent can be paid for them but that isn’t really any long term solution. Glaringly the father needs rehabilitation of some kind, restoration of his pride, his self esteem, his confidence in himself. Occasional casual jobs are no solution, they only confirm him in his lack of worth. And the children will pick this up, too, for their own future detriment. The caseworkers assigned to this case who discussed it on BBC1 (20.4.74) could make no suggestions beyond paying his rent for him or getting it paid in some way.

However, to a community worker rehabilitation means involvement. Involvement in his own affairs, involvement in his community. As he takes on responsibility for himself and his community so his pride finds new soil in which to take root. Yes, pride, whatever the Bible may claim. Without pride and confidence and self esteem and security there can be no humility, no giving away of what I don’t have enough of for myself.

So if the social services are going to pay his rent arrears, at least they can get something in return if only to save his pride. They can get his help in running a local club, starting a youth project, anything. Anything that will ask him for help, will tax his ingenuity, will involve him helping others as well as himself. Instead of a handout, a fair exchange. Instead of ‘I help you’, how about you helping me? But can social workers, case workers, allow themselves to be helped by their ‘clients’? That is the crux of the matter, the very question we started out to answer by looking at group work training in the first place.
