
PERSONAL ANTI-ZOMBIE TACTICS

by

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The analysis in Jerome Liss's "Our Culture makes Zombies of us" (Self & Society Vol XIV No 3.) seems to me to be entirely correct. In my personal experience of Unemployment, and of working with Unemployed People for 12 years, I have frequently seen the syndrome he describes. The greatest problem faced by the unemployed is getting started on the problem they face.

The problem is often not being without a job. Each individual has his own package of problems, and even if it appears at first glance to be like the next person's, closer inspection reveals different priorities. Thus Jerome's "Living positively when unemployed" group needs some form of external facilitator. Not because the facilitator knows best, but because the resource of personal integration, and access to the resources of society has to have a focus.

Having tried to be such a facilitator, it seems to me that the solution that Jerome is proposing is not addressing the most immediate **problem**. It may be that outside my narrow realm of experience he is absolutely correct, though I feel that he is not. In reading through this note I realise that I have used

the masculine personal pronoun (he) exclusively, that is because the bulk of my experience has been with mature men. The slight contact I have had with women does not contradict what I try to say, but it would be impertinent of me to claim knowledge of resolving problems facing women. This was particularly brought home to me in looking at Jerome's list of "Mutual Participation Groups". I wondered why when I got to the problem:

"indignant that men can beat up and humiliate women"

I was cross. I recognise that there is a need for help to battered women, that more sensitivity is required in establishing the facts in a particular rape case. That isn't the solution to the problem. The solution to the problem is to release the man from the tensions that cause him to beat up women. I would think, from my sheltered male bastion, that balanced men do not beat up and humiliate women; it is unbalanced men that do it. What causes that unbalance, how do we help the individual unbalanced man tackle it, is there some predisposing pattern in the relationship he has with women that generates such hate? I feel that what I try to say here is related to

these issues, but I must stay within the experience that I have, and that tends to be male dominated.

The most immediate problem is approached through Jerome's term "Personal Passivity". The individual has to come to terms with his own position. It is not enough to drag the child away from the television and plonk him down with other children, he will drift back into "Personal Passivity". The problem is to help the individual generate a sense of "Personal Activity", and indeed that seemed to me to be the message in Jerome's case study of Robert. By helping the individual break his individual barrier the individual was released into an activity.

Jerome's approach to Inner Commands emphasises this personal element. The commands are internal to the individual, and relate only to him. The manner in which the individual reacts is peculiar to him. The facilitator's task is to find the appropriate key to help the individual overcome the inertia of "Personal Passivity". That is a task which seems to me to transcend the application of technique. That is not to decry the value of technique, any more than I am decrying the importance of working in a group. The technique that has been highly successful with one individual may not have any relevance to the problems of another person.

Writing elsewhere* I say:

"It would appear that these tough realistic, thinking people are well aware of the emotional pressures that unemployment is subjecting them to, even though they feel

powerless to handle them. They also seem to recognise that this powerlessness demonstrates the need for external help, and where they have experienced this external help they feel that it is at least as much this emotional support that has benefited them as the other contents of the activity".

It then transpires that a variety of activities develops this support, and a common quote in the same context is along the lines:

"Marriage increases the chances of survival"

The pattern and support offered within marriage are so various that it is difficult to list them, but it would seem to revolve around the ability to communicate with another concerned human being.

In a similar manner, as facilitator I frequently became the repository of anger, guilt, frustration, bewilderment, not only over the lost job, but over a whole range of damaged relationships. The person who did not have a sound relationship within his marriage would find his salvation not in another job, but in either repairing, or fleeing from, the flawed relationship. There is some evidence, though it is confused with other issues, that if the flawed relationship is not corrected, the new job will last less than two years, a condition beginning to earn the title "Repetitive Redundancy".

In perceiving the flaws in the relationship it was often through developing a one to one relationship with another person. Occasionally it

was with the facilitator, although for too many such a person carries overtones of authority. It may be in developing an affair with a person of the opposite sex, although I suspect that such a relationship is flawed from the start because it begins with incorrect aspirations from the damaged person, and often both partners are damaged. The most common person outside marriage with whom a defusing relationship arises is another member of the same sex, with a similar background, and similar values. Such a person may himself be struggling with the same, or closely similar problems, so that the help proffered on both sides is that which the individual wishes to receive.

It would seem that the chances of acquiring such help are most likely to be found if a group is developed which enhances the risk of an encounter with a person wounded in the same war. The encounter may be brief or prolonged. I recall one individual who left after experiencing less than a day with the group with which I was active, who later wrote and said how a particular encounter had changed his view of the problem, and thereby lead to its solution. In another case a pair who used the activity intermittently over a period of eighteen months, or more, were split when one of them resolved his marriage pressures, and obtained work. Three months later he was faced with a choice of staying with that job or moving to something better. He engineered from that choice an opportunity for his friend.

It would seem that the group has a role to play, but I am dubious of

having it set up by those experiencing the trauma that it seeks to address. I believe that it would be useful for the facilitator to have some experience of the problem, but to have moved past it. There is the practical problem that the group is likely to fold when the active instigator has his difficulties resolved and moves on. Those left then become bereft, and their condition may be worse than if they had never attended the group. There is also a problem that can arise from the instigator's too close identification with specific aspects of the problem, which may not be central to the issues he thinks he is facing. The person made redundant thinks that all that is necessary is to find another job. If the marriage in which he is involved is crumbling, it may be that is what requires attention first. It is commonplace that:

"When troubles come, they come not single spies, but in battalions".

If groups are self founding, there seems to me to be a risk that the individual will give the wrong trouble priority. One of the roles of the facilitator is the option available to the individual with trauma to have help in establishing priorities. If the group is too fiercely focused on one problem, then the risk is that the single problem will be tackled with great vigour when other problems need prior attention.

If this view is correct, then what is required to overcome the "Personal Passivity" is a means of generating a "Personal Activity". It may be that a group is the instant answer. If the

individual does not bring to the group, or quickly have given to him, some commitment to that group, he can sit on the periphery and gain very little. The facilitator has to be aware of this, and offer to help him gain that commitment, and the reason he is a facilitator is that he must only make the offer to help. He must not insist on the person participating, that could be no more than a reinforcement of the passivity by taking away the choice to join or not to join in, which may be the first step in activity. It may be that some other activity is required, and the options there are various. The facilitator must be aware that

he, and the group with which he works, are only one possible route.

This then would seem to be the root of the solution to the problem of "Personal Passivity", to help the individual generate his own resolution of his own problems. The generic need is to generate "Personal Activity", and out of that activity will grow the Creativity and Love that lie dormant in each of us. To place all that energy in an environment in which the germinated seed cannot flourish seems likely to reinforce the passivity.

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SONNET ON DISSOLVING BARRIERS

The soul that once has won to its true state,
Achieved by Love the Goal and reached the Friend,
Dissolved the walls and veils and brought an end
To all the barriers that separate;

That soul has found its verity, the straight
Pathway to that to which all pathways tend,
Which reason, heart, and intellect defend,
And no adjournments can invalidate.

The sense of separation is the source
Of all that clips our flight and saps our force
And dims the hopeful lights and makes us weak.

In its removal is our happiness
And love's unique signification: This
It is we must deliberately seek.

Ann Keith
