

and accredit myself to work in specific areas of Humanistic Psychology and then to hear my peers' opinion of my claims made the original assessment a very important piece of writing. We also needed to have worked through the basic barriers that might have prevented us from being able to give clear feedback. I think that we achieved both these goals.

USING THE MEDICINE WHEEL TRADITION ON AN IDHP DIPLOMA COURSE

by Annie Spencer

Developing group facilitation skills - what a difficult area this is. Good group facilitation is quite idiosyncratic and a role to which we bring personality and charisma as well as acquired skills.

We can attend training groups to learn about group dynamics and to learn through experience what it is like to be facilitated in various ways. We can study John Heron's six categories of facilitator skills. Then, if we are lucky, we may have a chance or two of assisting a more experienced leader while they run their group in their way. After this it is rare to get the freedom to explore new areas in depth with an ongoing group. Where is the space in which we can explore with safety and develop styles and different areas of work?

I think the IDHP offer an opportunity for group leaders to do just these things. It has devised course structures that manage to combine the safety of a constant container with enough fluidity for it to be alive and open to development. In the two year IDHP diploma course, the course contract presents a format that ensures that a core of basic modalities in Humanistic Psychology is covered by visiting weekend facilitators. This frees the primary facilitators to choose a particular modality on which to focus. Previous IDHP courses have been led with primary modalities such as: co-counselling and T-group training, eclectic with an emphasis on open encounter, the transpersonal, body and transpersonal approaches, cocounselling, primal regression, creative groupwork, collaborative enquiringism.

Peter Reason and I, having run four 2 year IDHP courses between us, took the opportunity to explore new ground with our recent group. While adhering to the basic structure of an IDHP course, we chose to focus on Reichian bodywork and the Medicine Wheel teaching of the Native Americans for specific teaching input. These are areas in which we are both working, and we decided to explore how well these two modalities might work together.

Our aims included:

- Exploring the meeting place of psychology and spirituality with the mapping available from these two disciplines.

- Looking at connections between the Native American chakra system and the system of Reichian body armouring, when working with an individual.

_ Exploring, when working with the group dynamic, the model of 'the tribe' rather than 'the family'. We felt this to be an appropriate approach for a group of twenty who could use it to explore family relationships within smaller sub-groups.

- How ceremony fits in with group process.

- How well do the group's structures address the participant's process in the context of current social, political and ecological developments?

It proved a fruitful and rewarding field to explore. Of the many things we discovered I comment in this article only on the relationship of the Medicine Wheel in general, and ceremony in particular, to a group of this kind.

The concerns of many course participants seemed to run along the lines of 'How can I live the comfortable life I have grown accustomed to without it destroying the environment on which I depend?', 'How can I deal with being in such a small world where everything seems to interconnect and I seem ever more powerless?' And for the new generation in their twenties, 'How can I find a basis for my ethical values, a root for my being, a connection to this planet, having grown up in a non-religious, confused and chaotic society?'

The model of the Native American Medicine Wheel provided metaphors and maps to help us face and deal creatively with such questions as these both socially as well as within us psychologically.

Stemming from an oral tradition that has evolved in a semi-nomadic culture far removed from ours, these maps have been translated by two men, Hyemeyhsts Storm and a one-time apprentice of his, Harley Swiftdeer. From these two, a coherent system of 'wheels' has emerged which is subtle, synthetic and seems infinitely adaptable.

The basic structure is based on the four points of the compass: north, south, east and west. Each of these points holds a quality that basically relates to the everyday natural world around us. According to this tradition, the East is the place where the sun rises, holds the qualities of light, illumination and spirit. The West, where the sun sets each evening, disappearing behind the earth's horizon and leaving darkness behind, holds the qualities of the earth, of darkness, of death and going within. The South is the part most warmed by the sun's rays and easiest to survive on. This holds the qualities of the plants who stand where they are seeded and accept what life has to offer, the qualities of trust and innocence. And the North, always the coldest, harshest part of a garden, hill-side or whatever, holds the qualities that the animals teach, qualities of strategy, intelligence and wisdom of the heart.

Guided Fantasy...

The Medicine Wheel related well to the IDHP course structures. The IDHP is about self development and it is

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also about social change, in both these areas the Medicine Wheel could throw useful light and provide structure. In some ways it compared favourably with more traditional methods personal development, cocounselling, encounter, or regression, which sometimes focus so much on the inner that it is hard to balance this with enough emphasis on relationship with, and action in, the outer world. We found that the Medicine Wheel could relate and dovetail well with the language and exercises from various forms of Humanistic and transpersonal psychology.

We used guided fantasy work to open people up through their imaginations to the symbolism of the Medicine Wheel. We helped people focus their intent - a concept that is central to preparation for good ceremonial work - by using deepening pair work as developed by the Enlightenment Intensive. We learned the Native American chakra system and explored, using our hands to find any energy flow and blockages in them. We used Reichian methods of loosening body armour to release these blocks.

...and Ceremony

The transpersonal is central to all Medicine Wheel teachings and explored and expressed through the use of ceremony. In my approach as a facilitator, ceremony involves the careful creation of a dramatic space whose central action is left empty - to be filled by whatever happens for each individual. I start by considering where the group is. I look at issues that are prevalent - the Gulf War, the struggle in South Africa, for example and what pressures they are putting on us. I look at the seasons, I notice signs. Then I design a happening, an enactment, a piece of theatre. Whatever starts to bubble up inside gets translated into the language of the Medicine Wheel and put into the framework it provides. So there is a common language. Each participant both follows the pattern that is laid down, the prescribed forms and brings intent and preparedness of their own. These tensions interact. We raise the level of our concentration and our emotional involvement with movement and chant - and realisations come, visions are received, new dreams are seeded.

The use of Medicine Wheel based ceremony focuses intent on particular issues - and can shift stuck issues for the group. Within this context the needs and power of the group and the individual complement one another very well. If the ceremony is planned correctly it will make a container within which individuals can work on their own issues completely separately from each other. It will provide a time when each individual can feel the group as a positive force - Together we build up energy and hold it for each other as we enact our part in the shared drama and reinforce our private dream. This provides a counterpoint to the more common interactive quality of the group. At other times, whatever an individual chooses to explore for her/himself often stirs up other group members so that work on their own process gets interrupted by other's responses or reactions. While this is creative in many ways. constant interaction over a long period can in itself become

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counter-productive. The group can become an exhausting arena where challenge, or intimacy is continually demanded. Ceremony allows individuals to have a very different group experience and therefore acknowledge and start to notice their own cyclical swings and needs for periods of withdrawal; and yet even at these latter times still receive the creative support of the group.

The IDHP two year diploma course structure gave us a unique opportunity to explore these areas with a group of people experienced and motivated enough to accompany us and challenge us with rigour, rage and humour every step of the way. An example of a piece of coursework which was written out first time almost in its final form:

How many dips into this ocean
will untie the nets to reclaim
the necessary energy to be.....

To be wholly, not as some flotsam
ungrounded, floating boundary-less
upon the sea,

How many waves of touching grief
to wash away the shifting sand
reveal the earth beneath...

The effluence of despair grows
larger on the beach
covering natural substances, masking
the joy of hope.

Deep on the ocean floor
the wrecked experience shifts
not wanting to be felt
resisting all attempts -
to lift, and bring it, to the shore.

It shudders, moans, makes a few small cries,
not yet erupting into consciousness
for fear of that awful storm....
if once begun will it ever cease
or will it overcome?

course work extract by Billie Homby