

6th July 2000.

Dear Self & Society,

The last time I saw Earwig he was creeping furtively away, under a pile of stones. However, I have a suspicion that he may have made a sneaky comeback, for I believe I have spotted him up to his old tricks again squashed, but not done-for, between 'State Registration' and 'Rebirthing' in the June/July issue of S&S .

Please be good enough to pass on the enclosed to this enigmatic creature.

Yours sincerely,

6th July 2000.

Dear Don,

In the interests of confidentiality I'm writing in reply to your advert in the last issue of S&S - my partner is a fabulous listener! As one who is frequently desperate to increase her contact hours I am interested in knowing more about-you. -

First, I must confess that I'm not actually a trainee so I do have a pretty good idea how I come, across, on top, or underneath. I'm into trying out new inventions and mad about re-runs, but I'm afraid I'm not too interested in how my client thinks and feels so long as he does what he is told. You mention feedback and supervision, well you can't teach an old dog new tricks is what I always say; I'm an expert at taking risks with style, so we should get along pretty well.

Please send a recent photograph of yourself looking your best in your birthday attire. Accreditation is not necessary in fact it's a sodding turn-off. I value independence, ingenuity, eccentricity, and a rampant imagination above ethics or codes of practice.

If you come up to my expectations you can bend me, shake me, any way you want me - open endedly.

Yours in anticipation,

Noni Kers.

P.S. You state that your fees are negotiable so I guess we can decide who pays who after the first session.

Dear S&S

About your editorial in the April-May issue - yes, I think it is the butterfly effect. As S&S was in the post to me, I was sending an email Letter to the Editor of BAC's Counselling (May edn) in support of John Rowan's earlier article and complaining of therapists collaring a name for a particular style of therapy, which is actually much the same as what many of us practice. I wrote in part: - 'If we are to reduce tribalism, it's not helped by Brickell and Wubbolding's article on "Reality Therapy" [coined by Glasser in 1960's]. I read this looking for something new, yet kept on saying, 'Yes, but I do that as well - this is just another integrated therapy'. So I became increasingly angry with their implied claim that Reality Therapy is different (yet another tribe) and needs to have certification, special courses, workshops and yet more books and articles. It's this very possessiveness, the dark side of ownership, that increasingly divides the profession. Is it really about expressing 'my truth', or more about getting kudos and income in hijacking and cornering a market.

Of course, neither Glasser or Wilber have copywrited Reality or Integral, so why not go ahead and publish Your Way anyway!

Mind you, have you noticed the plethora of trade marked practices appearing, as in 'Restructure Your Life'?

Regards,
Tony Morris

Dear S&S

John Sivyer's courageous and well thought out article 'The Search for Restorative Justice' struck several chords with me because I had occasion to make a complaint as a client of therapy two years ago, with unsatisfactory results.

As I discovered, to see the situation as a confrontation between a perpetrator and a sufferer, and to try to restore the balance by imposing sanctions on the perpetrator or awarding compensation to the victim does not work. I think the reason is that in therapy the relationship between the therapist and the client is of paramount importance, and the healing of the client seems to depend on the state of this relationship.

The type of therapy that I had was a shortened form of psychoanalysis combined with hypnosis, with the aim of improving my confidence at work. During this time my therapist apparently instigated a verbal sexual relationship with me, but did it so subtly and confidently that I did not realise at first that something was wrong; all I knew was that after he terminated the therapy, I was distraught and almost overwhelmed by desolation. I was afraid to complain about my therapist, because I believed that I was embarking on a battle with him; a confrontation that would make my therapist an enemy who had intimate knowledge of me. When I did complain, the principal of the organisation told me that he would speak very seriously to my therapist, and he assured me that my identity would be kept a secret. I believe that he did keep his promise. However, he was unable to offer any help to me. He said that while my therapist had behaved unprofessionally, my therapy had been successful; I just had to wait for the transference (i.e. my relationship with him) to dissolve.

The problem is that my damaged relationship with my therapist still remains, like a corroded pipe leaking dirty water, even though I have not seen him for two years. I can understand John Sivyver's reference to Salome's request for the head of John the Baptist on a plate. I feel that I have symbolically offered my therapist as a sacrifice, but with that act, I have sacrificed some of myself also.

I believe that it would have been helpful for me to meet my therapist again with a third person present, someone who would make sure I had a chance to speak (my therapist was very dominant). I know, however, that my therapist's organisation would not support such a venture, since they believe that a meeting between client and therapist after termination of therapy will only rekindle transference and interfere with the client's recovery, whereas separation of the client and therapist will eventually lead to the client's healing. They may be right, but it is certainly a very slow process.

John Sivyver says, 'I have little confidence that my former client gained emotional healing. I hope I am wrong.' I have had the same thought, in reverse. My therapist continues to practise, but I do not know whether his organisation offered him help or just censure. I do not know whether he has healed or learned from his experience.

As for myself, I did gain some emotional healing, but from an unexpected source. One of my problems after therapy was that I did not know how I could get help to deal with what had happened to me. I was unwilling to consult another therapist; after all, my first attempt at therapy had only made my problems worse. I did confide in a friend, but although he was very sympathetic and supportive, he did not have the knowledge to help me as much as I needed. So I chose to seek help on the Internet.

I set up an email account using a pseudonym, and posted messages to newsgroups. My first post drew a response from an experienced and compassionate hypnotherapist, who corresponded with me by email and encouraged me, with uncanny perception and empathy, to tell him my story. A later post, on the subject of the dissolution of transference, became the start of an ongoing discussion with Rosie Alexander, author of *Folie a Deux*. I also joined a discussion group on the subject of emotional and verbal abuse in psychotherapy, and took part in exchanges that were emotional, thoughtful, and even humorous. I found that the use of a pseudonym, together with the geographical separation from my correspondents, gave me a feeling of security that encouraged me to express my feelings openly. Email allowed me to progress at my own pace because I could compose my replies when I felt ready to. Despite the limitations of the email medium, my relationships on the Internet felt warm and personal.

I have had support from other sources as well as the Internet, including face-to-face counselling, but I believe that I owe a great deal to the Internet. As a form of repayment, I have produced a website telling my story, hoping that it will help those who have had similar experiences and will make a contribution to research on psychotherapy abuse.

Best wishes,
Natalie Simpson

Further Reading

Verbal and Emotional Abuse in Psychotherapy discussion list:
<http://www.home.aone.net.au/psychotherapy>.

Natalie's Hypnotherapy Adventure: <http://home.clara.net/nrsimpson>.