

C.P.D. - A FOOL'S GOLD?

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Continuing, professional development; this necessary (though in my meetings with fellow therapists - sometimes resented) aspect of the life of a professional therapist, is at best, often only a hotch potch or mixed bag of wise nuggets in an often banality of poorly conceived and poorly delivered training.

At worst it might be seen by the receiving participants as an exploitation, especially when as so often is the case, such high fees are charged for it. Then the penny, if not the pound, begins to drop; that some people are making a great deal of money from this requirement that we all must fulfil, to remain accredited and registered. Indeed, we might then see C.P.D. as in part, a 'milking', if you will, of the rich pickings that are to be had from this almost entirely, unregulated, yet statutory market.

It is a strange, if not cruel irony, that to remain regulated as professional therapists, we must sign up to courses of training, workshops and conferences, that are, themselves, bound by no

regulations or even, official guidelines for good practice.

For many years now I have, along with others, diligently, and with enthusiasm, attended several workshops a year. I continue to enjoy meeting fellow therapists and keeping up to date with any new information, new ideas or an inspiring teacher who helps revitalise any jaded, tired or flagging parts of me. Having practised now as a therapist for over 21 years, I am aware that a re-stimulation and challenging of any complacency that, like the signs of ageing, steals up on me uninvited, is vital.

So, I attend workshops, ever hopeful, thirsting for the 'buzz' that accompanies learning and is presented afresh, re-training. Sadly, I am often disappointed, frustrated and fed-up with the thin diet of 'goodies' that are sometimes presented to me. Indeed, often little is offered, other than a re-working of familiar, sometimes even out-dated theories and practices.

And most commonly, the workshop leader will straight away,

after the lengthy round of us all introducing ourselves (this can consume one fifth of a day's average five hour attendance), inform us that he/she is not an expert, that we the participants, are the experts, and with this justification for little to be offered, that seeks to flatter us all, we are directed (or have to find ourselves) into groups to discuss, chat, share or find answers to the leader's questions. These are then reported back to the leader who writes them up on a white board or screen.

And then we discuss them some more. *And* then we have lunch. Then, we nod somnambuliently after lunch; our food, tiredness and boredom, resisting the efforts of the leader to stimulate us to more discussion. Then there is tea. Then a plenary (even bigger yawn) in which the egotists dominate. And then farewell. We collect our C.P.D. certificates informing us we now understand self harmers, attempted suicides, depressives, obsessive/compulsives and borderline personalities.

Five more hours are clocked up against the need for 30 per year. My cheque book is the lighter to the tune of £50 - £100, and the workshop leader goes home with £3 - 400 in his or her pocket. Such workshops are nothing short of a scandal (and they are common).

Conferences are even more of a scandal. Presenters unashamedly read from and advertise their latest books. Researchers justify their existences. And they and

especially the organisers, go home with even more money in their pockets. For the average cost to a conference participant is invariably £100 - £150, sometimes £200 for a day.

Or there are the short training courses held over one day, perhaps a weekend or a series of days or half days. At these, we are invariably lectured, talked at rather than with. We can be patronised, taught to suck very old eggs, treated as if we "knew nothing" and generally hectorated at as if back in a Victorian classroom. To contemporise this archaic experience, we might be given an exercise or two. Again, then get into groups and discuss, report back, see it written up by the tutor, etc. etc.

These forms of torture are working. I confess, I am an incompetent, stupid, ineffective, therapist. And I will give the names of all my conspirators if only you will stop this painful persecution.

Yes, I lampoon, I criticize and exaggerate (like most art forms) to make a point. And yes, I have experienced some fine C.P.D. training, workshops etc. But really, there is some awful, unregulated 'tat' out there, that at worst, is actually exploitive.

Judge for yourselves. do my scenarios ring bells? Does the cap fit?

