

Oh the places you'll go! IDHP in 2006.

Ruth
Bradbrook

and

Jenny
Cook

*'Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away! You have brains in your head. You have
feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you
choose.'* (Dr Seuss, *Oh the places you'll go*)

The IDHP is a non hierarchical, non-profit making sponsoring organisation. It has been accrediting facilitators since 1976 awarding their post graduate diploma in humanistic psychology (formerly F-Styles) and enabling progression to masters and PhD studies in related disciplines. Founded from the Human Potential Research group at Surrey University, the IDHP celebrates a rich tradition of learning and is committed to personal and organisational empowerment and transformation.

We were two of the eleven participants on the 1991-2001 Institute for Development of Human Potential (IDHP), formerly known as F-styles. It's been an amazing journey, we've been to some great places along the way and we want to tell you something about it. We hope that from this article others will be inspired to travel our path, to explore humanistic group processes, and seek to develop themselves in order to move towards reaching their full potential as powerful and influential leaders, facilitators and coaches.

Ruth's story



I've been a bit busy lately accumulating amongst other things a BSc in Environmental Science; in Peru and Bolivia I climbed the highest mountains; in Nepal I kayaked some of the finest white water rivers; I have a Post Graduate Certificate in Outdoor Education and Science; in Laos and Cambodia I cycled and donated boats to those in need after we had travelled on some of the wonderful inland waterways; I've run a few marathons and represented Great Britain in triathlon; one weekend I kayaked from Scotland to Ireland and back; I have raced by foot, bike and kayak across New Zealand even though there is a perfectly good train and I proudly hold the IDHP Diploma in Facilitation.

My IDHP Diploma amongst the list of exciting experiences was one of the most profound, scary, freeing, magical, amazing, surprising, grounding, wonderful, useful and never ending challenges I encountered. It, along with all my other experience has shaped who I am today and the work I do.

I was ten years into my chosen career as a development trainer

working with 'Youth at Risk' in the outdoor environment when I decided there was something else I wanted to find out about to move me on. I wanted to learn more about working groups and individuals to facilitate meaningful change and development, and to learn more about leading my team. I wasn't averse to learning more about me but wasn't particularly looking for this. I was struggling to find something that hit the spot until I saw a small ad in a newspaper for the IDHP Diploma. I enquired further about it and the more I found out, the more intrigued and inquisitive I became. I wanted to do it and without fully knowing what it was all about and what it would do for me, I scabbled together the money which came partly from my pocket, partly from responses to funding letters I had written and partly from Fairbridge who I was working for at the time – this felt like a good mix.

July 1999 soon came around and there I was on my way across Wimbledon Common to day one, which for me remains as vivid as my first day at school. Full of anxieties...what shall I wear? What have I got myself into this time? Is it the right decision? What will I have to offer? They'll all be experts? I won't know anything.

I walked into the room and the anxieties slowly mixed with a sea of projections and stereotypes...which one's the copper? Will I fancy anyone? Will they fancy me? I hope so! She looks dull... what! a crimplene dress and dodgy strappy sandals....she seems cool...great a Scottish accent that's good.....a Welshman – good my mum's welsh he'll be alright....crikey he's

a bit rude and looks scary I won't sit next to him, which one's the vicar – it's a woman!

And then the two year roller coaster ride across the turbulent seas began. Thankfully, as with all storms, there were periods of calm. It was an astonishing two years, rich with learning I still continue to reflect on and integrate. It's a good job I wasn't averse to learning about me because this is THE most valuable learning I gained from the two years along with a deep understanding of facilitation and leadership and all it entails. However I must admit there was a bit of resistance in the early days in the process of gaining insight into how I behave with others and in groups, but as I emerged from hiding in my jumper the fuzziness settled and it all began to make sense. I gained and developed beyond all my expectations. All the models and theories of group work and facilitation suddenly came to life and this time I really 'got it'. They were all being acted out in front of us. Our primary facilitators Mica Douglas and Brian Watts were highly skilful in managing the process and balancing this with assisting us all in making sense of it and offering models and theories. I understood so much more about the projections and stereotypes I make and how they can cloud relationships. I began to trust my observations and was able to add

a confident voice to these. Those I put on pedestals slowly came down or I joined them as an expert on certain topics. I began to value myself, recognise my skills, realise my potential and power as a facilitator and allow my own style to develop and be seen.

It was like I was wearing twenty pairs of sunglasses and as each pair came off during the two years I could begin to see the dynamics in groups and relationships more and more clearly, and people could begin to see me. It's not to say the sunglasses don't go back on at times, it's more like I'm not stuck with the same pair I was wearing twenty years ago!

The diploma has had a tremendous impact on my personal and professional worlds. Soon after graduating from the diploma I got a national Training and Development Manager Post with Fairbridge, a national youth development organisation working with some of the hardest to reach young people. The skills and confidence I had developed as a facilitator and trainer served me well in this post. The self awareness I had grown during the diploma assisted me with all the dynamics and politics that are usually around in any work place. Two years ago I went self employed in order to be able to widen the contexts in which

When I read the Dr. Seuss book 'Oh the places you'll go!' I felt it described my experience and journey on my two year IDHP Diploma. I felt more in control of where I was heading and much clearer about what I wanted. Amazing things started to happen which outstripped all my expectations. It wasn't all sweetness and light but I felt more equipped and able to cope with the difficult things too.'

Ruth Bradbrook
IDHP Diploma Graduate 2001

I work. These two years have gone extremely well, branching out into the public and corporate sectors, and I am committed to doing work which is real to me and facilitates meaningful and lasting change with individuals, teams and organisations I to work with. I have also been fortunate to be able to mix the work with following another current passion of mine, triathlon. I recently came fifth in my age group at the World Long Course triathlon Champs in Denmark, and have amazed myself at winning a few other races too.

It's not all been easy, and in the words of Dr Seuss there have been 'bang ups and hang ups' along the way. One of my great supports continues to be Jenny Cook, the lady in the crimplene dress and strappy sandals who I met on day one of my IDHP Diploma. We spent a lot of time travelling up and down the M4 together to attend the Diploma

in London and developed a huge respect, friendship and valued working relationship. During our diploma we dreamed we would deliver our own diploma somewhere down the line. Our working relationship is one I hold in the highest regard as we strive to be open and honest with each other and to model everything we've learned about reaching our potential individually and when we work together.

Our diverse background and experiences make for a great combination. We see things from different perspectives yet hold common underlying values and ethics. We challenge each other rather than collude. And what's great is that we simply love working together. It feels very exciting to have put the wheels in motion to deliver the next IDHP diploma in September 2006, to have gone through the accreditation process and to be at a stage where we are currently recruiting.

Jenny's story



It's the winter of 1998 and I'm plucking up courage to leave my job. For twenty-five years the NHS and I have served each other well. I've worked my way through the system of nurse, midwife, nurse manager, general manager to Director and now I know its time to go.

The thing about knowing it's time to go is interesting. Something has shifted for me. My Dad died two years ago and our youngest son is having real problems fitting into the world outside school: somehow my job doesn't 'do it' for me any more. It doesn't look after me, allow me to be who I can really be, I'm finding the big organisation of the NHS has gone



The web of group dynamics

from being supportive to feeling stifling, and I can't really find the words for what I mean but I know it's time for me to do something different.

So, ok I'll leave. Help!

I'm pretty clear about what I'm going to do out there in the big world, I've always loved the theory and practice of leadership and have experienced the practicalities of working to objectives and performance indicators. I can talk the talk and do the doing and I know how hard it all is to do in a really effective way. My passion is for working with small groups and individuals providing the support needed to get their job done, while fostering a self learning, self supporting way of working. All this combined makes for a perfect job for me.

But looking after me and sustaining myself through this tough time is something else. I know I need to change and it's time to grow into my skin, and the major major question for me what will that mean for my relationship with lovely husband Jim? He doesn't want to work with me (thank goodness, that doesn't feel right) and he's really supportive and encouraging, but what happens if I change and we leave each other behind? Ok, it will be a test, but I know I need to do this no matter what, and we will have to trust the process.

What I know is that I want to have lots of varied experiences. I want to meet people I'd never have met in the ordinary run of my NHS world. I want to explore my own boundaries and potential. I want to work outside of the protection of a large organisation and meet others who do that already and also those who seek that too. I want some help with this self employment thing. I want to get stretched in a way that I can't even describe because I don't know what I don't know!

Coinciding with all of this three things happened: 1, I saw an advert for the IDHP Diploma course in a news paper: 2, my coach gave me information about personal development courses of which the IDHP was one and 3, the HR Director in the Trust gave me some paid time to think about 'what next?'

So I took the plunge. I met Mica and Brian, the primary facilitators on the prospective IDHP Diploma and loved them from the start! I made a bit of a plan for getting the money together, enrolled and started on one of the most significant adventures of my life.

And I discovered all the things I wanted, and more.

Mica and Brian supported, challenged, comforted, organised, led, sat back and observed, pushed, pulled and stretched me and us all! We facilitated each other to explore all manner of issues... a few that stick in my mind are: being self employed; living with your family and its history and patterns; models and theories we use at work; drawing treasure maps; working in groups and with individuals.

We had external facilitators who each spent two days with the group exploring our individual and collective stories and experiences, using topics and medium such as dance, gestalt, FIRO, psychodrama, regression, sexuality.

We spent time together away from the comfort zone of our 'normal' meeting



Final Accreditation

place on residential building bonfires, singing, laughing, crying, learning more about ourselves and how we can develop as leaders, facilitators and coaches.

I learnt loads. I can safely describe it as learning because it was what I have wanted and needed from learning all my life...a peeling back of the onion skin of knowledge, finding out how I fit into the world, what is my purpose for being here, how is my behaviour driven by my values and beliefs and how does that impact on others?

Scary, exciting, stimulating, reflective, uncomfortable that's how it was. To this day one of the really significant challenges I remember is being invited to go and stand next to the person you least like the look of in the group. Ok, I didn't stand next to Ruth, she was a

close second though, she was so young, really casually dressed and she ate hummus - what was that anyway? However, she and I stood next to someone else, and the subsequent discussion about the reasons and subjectiveness of our choices was a real journey for me and the start of a whole new relationship with Ruth and the other person.

I count Ruth as one of my really good mates. We travelled the M4 to London most months together while completing our diploma, we processed and shared all sorts of experiences and challenges long in to the journey and beyond. We shared our hopes and our fears, one of which was to run this Diploma course ourselves at some point in the future. It's been a challenge for our working relationship and friendship, also for us as individuals to get the necessary accreditation from the IDHP committee, the 'bang ups and hang ups' that Ruth referred to applies to us in this process but I know that it's added a whole new dimension to the way we support and challenge each other. Currently I'm speechless (well almost) with the excitement at the thought of reaching that goal and running an IDHP Diploma.

I've still got the crimplene dress but not the dodgy sandals, just to remind me of the old me, not that I need it really. Incredible Journey, lucky me!

For more information about the next Diploma in Leadership, Facilitation and Coaching which is starting September 2006 and is being held at The Pierian Centre, Bristol, look on www.idhp.org, contact us at diploma@idhp.org or call Jenny on 07974927870. Contact from past graduates is also welcome.