

be kept within the reach of those who needed such refuges most. . . . and the only thing that spoils my day was a sense of selfishness that I was experiencing such pleasure that was much more desperately needed by Joan with s spastic son, Tina having had her eight operation, Sally just deserted at 50, Marion worn out with looking after aging parents, Nicole still grieving though her bereavement depression, and young Chrissie worried and afraid about her adolescent body. The only way these persons could afford such sanctuarial care would be in perhaps forthcoming social situation where automation means people retire early or work three days a week, in which there is a reservoir of voluntary help to build and maintain such places, under the direction of skilled paid staff.

But why, friends will ask, has she missed out the entire counselling component, which many of us have also dreamed about in setting up centres where people can take their problems and receive help in trying all the many different psychotherapeutic options of treatment which are now available from the analytical to the behavioural and expressive therapies? Could, or should, such sanctuarial care also be offered at this deeper level? Do we know enough about the workings of body and mind and soul to say other than that carefully experimental mixtures might be tried? Would the presence of a psychiatrist, or a chapel for meditation, or an arts and crafts room, or a gestalt group, perfect or perhaps pervert the flow of energies and restfulness which I experienced at this Sanctuary? And was mine merely the exaltation of the novice? Certainly it was an experience deliberately structured, as distinct from the spontaneously unique joys of making love, nursing one's baby, and doing the work one loves most, but shouldn't the AHP be interested also in similar promotions of potential and pleasure, even though personal growth is a much longer, deeper and more mysterious process?

Roy Ridgway

The Sparsholt Centre

As one of the critics of the Growth Movement said to me the other day, humanistic psychology is a reaction to a lot of mechanistic psychology, but it has its own problems too. And one of the main problems, I think, is that many of us are doing just what others in the past have done when they have stumbled upon some new, exciting way of living: they make rules, construct some kind of framework to practise what they believe, and then eventually the framework becomes more important than what they believe. They get hold of some technique and, after a while, it's like an actor who goes onto the stage with nothing more than his technique - he's played the part so often that he can do it in his sleep. He just relies on his technique to get him through. But he's just a mediocre actor if he thinks there's nothing more to acting than technique.

What I am saying is that to try to put into words what we are doing here in Sparsholt would, in a way, defeat what we are doing, because we are travelling

along a path that is not marked on any map. We are operating in what Krishnamurti describes as "the field of the unknown." When you do that, when you don't make any resolutions or plans, don't have any expectations, you may be, and in my experience often are, "surprised by joy." At any rate, life becomes intensely interesting.

The idea of this centre all grew out of a magazine I edited some years ago. It was called *New Doctor*. One of my consultant editors was a G.P. who was interested in the Sufis and had belonged to a Gurdjieffian group and also attended seminars on group therapy at the Tavistock Centre for Human Relations. He kept advising me to make every issue of *New Doctor* something quite different from every previous issue and to write only what was "real". Nothing is of any value unless it's "real", this G.P. said. He meant what Krishnamurti means when he says the only virtue is in seeing "what is". You must stick to that.

What happened was that I went round with my tape recorder and interviewed people in the medical world - in hospitals, group practices and so on - and talked about their jobs. I didn't try to write essays. I just wrote what I heard and saw. There was, for instance, Sister Hector, the Sister Tutor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, who said something I've never forgotten. "There are two kinds of knowledge," she said. "One is factual, the other is emotional. One wants to know, for instance, about a trial fibrillation - that this belongs to a certain part of the heart, what it looks like on the electrocardiogram, what structures are affected and so on.

But there is something else as well. For instance, the patient says, 'This terrible fluttering! I felt awful when it happened. I was sick and felt so ill. I thought I was going to die.'

You don't see this in a text book, do you? Unless you have got time to listen to people, you won't hear it at all. And this emotional knowledge is real knowledge, which enables you to operate with people and to deal with them as individuals. If you give nurses this kind of information, it makes teaching easier in lots of ways; it raises the emotional tone. Nurses can feel with and for these people."

Sister Hector went round the wards talking to patients about their problems, their fears and so on, and she took a tape recorder with her. Then she played her tapes back to the nurses and sometimes had them in tears.

The sort of things she got on tape can best be illustrated with the following story.

"One gets so involved in nursing a patient like that," said Sister Hector. "There's the problem of how the bag is to stick on - the technical details of it - and you never have time to hear how the girl managed before she came into hospital. You see her notes all right - 'Incontinent from birth' and so on - but nobody tells you how it feels to be incontinent. How did she manage

at school. . . at work. . . . what did she do? What about her mother with six pairs of knickers to wash every night? All the tiny details of a person's long uphill struggle through life."

Well, it's about ten years since I heard that story. I published the story in *New Doctor* - and there were many other stories like that which you don't often find in a medical journal. It was what my G.P. friend meant when he talked about writing about real things or what people mean when they say, "Tell it like it is."

Unfortunately, because of rising costs of production we couldn't go on publishing *New Doctor* and so I became a redundant editor. But then, just at the time when I lost my job, a publisher asked me to write a book about aggression and violence among young people.

I had six weeks in which to write it - and it's amazing how much I learnt in those six weeks. For instance, in order to meet the deadline I had to get up very early in the morning - at about 5 a.m. - and I discovered at that time, between sleeping and waking, the mind is surprisingly clear. There doesn't seem to be any clear-out division between the conscious and unconscious. It's like having a wide-awake dream which is telling you the truth about yourself. It didn't seem like me writing at all. It was like something inside me, some inner voice telling me what to write.

I couldn't do the whole job on my own, so my wife, Dorothea, helped me by doing some of the interviewing. And one of the persons she interviewed was Mike Pegg, who was then warden of Lancaster House, a Richmond Fellowship hostel.

Mike Pegg told Dorothea what was happening there. The people there are mostly disturbed young people who have been in trouble with the law or have been completely rejected by their families. "They come here," Mike said, "with all sorts of labels - personality disorders, schizophrenia or whatever. I take no notice of the label. One certain way of getting someone really screwed up is to call him a psychopath."

At Lancaster House they try to create time and space where youngsters can find out who they are and what they want to do in life.

"They can find out who they are," said Mike, "if they are prepared to be frank about themselves to other people. So that means they have to feel safe - safe in order to be vulnerable. We have to create an atmosphere of safety here where people can say 'O.K. I'll open up and I don't mind if anybody clobbers me.' That's very difficult with people here - it's a big step for them to take because all they've learnt in their families is that the only way to communicate is to hurt others - because they've been hurt themselves. That's the only pattern they know.

"And the only way to learn to be vulnerable is by having models - and, well,

models start with me. If I'm not willing to share my confusion, if I'm not willing to cry or to laugh in front of others, how the hell is anyone else going to learn to do it?

Mike went on talking like this. He was talking about a new way of helping disturbed people, a new way of relating to them, not advising or criticising, but seeing them as human beings who inside themselves are wonderful people, but who have found themselves in situations where it is normal - and even reasonable - to be aggressive and violent. Mike was putting into practice what Carl Rogers says about having an "unconditional positive regard" for the person who comes to you for help. Giving him all your attention and not making any kind of judgement. And letting go your own defences, showing him or her that you are human too.

Mike left the Richmond Fellowship hostel and joined the Family Therapeutic Unit, and what he learnt at Lancaster House he applied to helping families, not only sick or disturbed families, but ordinary families who felt they didn't really understand themselves.

We invited Mike to come to our home in Sparsholt, near Winchester. All the members of the family, including Dorothea's ninety-year-old mother, our son, Michael and his wife and children, our other son Tony, and our daughter Penny, all gathered together here one weekend.

We didn't know what to expect. I'd published my book by this time and felt there wasn't much Mike Pegg and his colleagues, who came down with him, could tell me but I was in for a big surprise.

This is not the place to tell that story, but what happened during that weekend completely changed our way of looking at ourselves as a family. We couldn't say that we were better people afterwards, but I think it would be true to say that we began to see things about ourselves that we'd never seen before. We were, as Mike promised, given certain tools. For instance, we learnt to try to avoid talking about others in the family, but if we did, always to "check it out", as Mike put it. In other words we should check out everything we said about somebody by talking directly to them. One of the many things I learnt was that as a writer I often used words as a smokescreen to hide my real feelings. I was always lecturing. Mike didn't allow me to do that.

After that Dorothea joined a group in London. It was at first mainly a study group, led by a psychoanalyst, but after about six months or so, the group was taken over by Oded Manor, who was first introduced to them as a Gestalt therapist.

Oded had been brought up in a kibbutz, and I think it was this background that made him such a good group leader. He was very much a group man.

Oded and his group, which included Dorothea, came down to Sparsholt for the occasional weekend and this was really the beginning of the Sparsholt Centre.

But illness in the family and work on a book of readings on humanistic psychology prevented me from doing much about organising regular weekend workshops until early this year. Then I invited Savitri Shinya here to lead a workshop on co-counselling. I put an advert. in the local newspaper. But the only response at first was from a social worker living in Dorset, a woman from Southampton and a Winchester couple (John and Joy Baskwell) who had been to many workshops at Quaesitor and elsewhere and seemed to be very pleased that we were starting our new centre near Winchester. They introduced various others who were interested, including a master at Winchester College. Since then John and Joy have been a great help to the Centre. But we still have a lot of problems, the main one being a lack of funds.

Following the Savitri weekend, groups met regularly at the Baskwell home in Winchester and also, whenever they could, they met in pairs to do some co-counselling.

We are now gathering a large number of people who come here regularly, not only from Hampshire but from various parts of the country, including an on-going group from London led by Michael Green. We have had a Soto Zen meditation weekend, led by John Crook of Bristol University, three days of Yogi Boogie which created a sensation in the local press and was reported in the Mirror (they got it all wrong, of course), a weekend called "Back to the Roots" led by Chris Fraser of Quaesitor, Encounter weekends and a second Co-counselling weekend led by Savitri.

We are in touch with Depressives Anonymous and hope to provide them with a place where groups of them can meet and work as a community for short periods. Now it looks as if we are going to be offered a house near Stockbridge to be used for this purpose and also for putting up large groups. Recently, Terry Cooper, the principal of Alpha, a drug rehabilitation centre in Hampshire, has been to see us to discuss ways of co-operating. He runs his own groups in Petersfield, applying techniques he has learnt in Alpha and in Synanon groups in the U.S.A.

Because we have no capital we are running the Centre as a sort of club, charging a membership fee of £5 for those who can afford it and less for those who can't. Non-members, of course, are invited to weekends, but members come at reduced fees. The membership fee helps to pay for advertising, printing, correspondence and so on which can be very heavy. We are also hoping to start a community fund for those members who need some sort of help. Savitri Shinya has offered to donate 10 per cent of her fees towards this.

Later in the year John Heron is coming to run a group for advanced co-counsellors.

Although I said at the beginning of this article that I am against saying too much about aims, or about following any particular path, I felt it was necessary to write something about what, at this stage of our development, we are trying to do. One always tries to do something. Even if you don't follow

rules, that is a way of behaving and needs to be said.

I was very impressed with some of the aims of a pioneer programme in Transpersonal Psychology which is being carried out by Johnson College, University of Redlands in the U.S.A., and I incorporated three of their aims, though slightly modified, in a statement of our own aims. they are:

1. To develop an atmosphere at all our weekend workshops and seminars that will stimulate and nurture the inward growth of the person and with it a growing awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal relationships.
2. To enlarge not only the awareness of reality, but to enlarge the capacity of experiencing its deeper levels.
3. To help to create and explore an extended concept of the human being as it is manifested in the physical, psychological and spiritual planes.

One thing I think any centre of this kind should do is to maintain close links with the outside world and so another of our aims is: "To study ways in which the knowledge gained at workshops and seminars can be put to practical use in everyday life and to make some contribution to the welfare of sick and needy people: e.g. the old, sick children, incurables, depressives, the poor, etc." I myself have made a small start in this direction by doing some work for the nearby Pinder Centre for Handicapped Children where, as they say, they try to reach out beyond the handicap to the child. Whatever the handicap, they say, there is always a plus condition. For instance, a child who cannot run or jump may be able to ride a horse, and a child in a wheelchair can splash about in a swimming pool.

In co-counselling, as I understand it, there is always this emphasis on the "plus condition", and that's what I particularly like about it. I first learnt about this when I visited Savitri in her flat in Hampstead. I was talking to her about how I'd never been a success in life, how I'd always moved from one job to another - but she turned every negative thing I said into something positive, and I came away from her flat feeling very good. She made what I thought of as failure seem like adventure - and made me feel I was a very adventurous and courageous person.

This has been a very sketchy article and probably far too long. I could go writing a lot more, but words are always so inadequate. The reality is always something different from what the words say and so the best way of getting to know us is to come to one of our workshops or to become a member which will entitle you to regular news letters and reduced fees. If you are interested, please write to me at Northwood Cottage, Northwood Park, Sparsholt, Winchester, Hampshire.
