

CO-COUNSELLING

This is the second of our two special issues on Co-Counselling. Last month John Heron covered the development of co-counselling with particular reference to the history and politics of the movement and Rose Evison described the processes and assumptions. This month Richard Horobin outlines the theoretical perspective and incorporates a guide to co-counselling practice and the way it links with other systems of growth and development. Taken together, these two volumes provide a comprehensive study of the practice of this most widespread and exciting self development technique.

Richard Horobin

EMOTIONAL DISCHARGE: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO IT?

"Catharsis" "primalling" "emotional discharge" "release" "implosion/explosion" A variety of words used to describe processes which, I consider, possess common features. Such activities typically involve the vivid evocation or re-living of painful and distressing experiences. These evocation however, occur in a present-time setting of safety, with a measure of dis-identification from the hurtful experience. Such processes typically entail major bodily involvement, be it tears or shivers or yawns or shouts, as part of a transformation of hurts to positive energies. Such emotional discharge (to use the jargon of co-counselling) is held to disperse negative emotions, to allow an increased responsiveness to the here and now situation as well as improved access to past experiences, to break up rigid patterns or behaviour emotion and thoughts, and to facilitate the emergence of new ways of being.

Many of the new therapies and of the vehicles of personal growth and awakening have a concern with discharge. Some indeed, such as co-counselling and primalling, give discharge a major emphasis. Conversely, many people interested in social and political change regard discharge as dissipation of energies which should be used to fuel action in the world.

After using co-counselling for myself over a period of several years I started, in partnership with Rose Evison, to teach the fundamentals of co-counselling to other people. Out of this activity came a number of practical questions. . . How precise can we be about what discharge is? Can we distinguish discharge from acting out, or from just plain acting, or from emotional manipulation of other people, or indeed from distress and pain? . . . How do we facilitate discharge best, in ourselves and others? . . . How is it that discharge seems to have such varied and rich potential outcomes? . . . How in practice do we get the most out of discharge? How do we best translate this potential into reality? This essay comprises my present expression of some of Rose's and my thoughts on these questions.

Words such as discharge and emotion are used in a variety of ways. Discharge for instance is used as a description of a process, as a description of conditions required for the process to occur, and as a description of the consequences of the process (see footnote). Rose and I have come to use the word 'discharge' to describe a process, quite a specific one as will be described below. You may use the word differently to us: well, a map is not the territory. Another distinction Rose and I find useful is to use the word 'emotion' in a general sense, a shorthand describing or implying context, behaviour, judgements, as well as bodily sensations and the subjective experience of pleasure/pain. So when I say "I'm anxious" I can only be understood, indeed can only understand myself, when this shorthand is translated. For example:-

"I'm anxious" { **context** I'm writing an article for many people to read, and it's due at the publishers soon.
behaviour I frequently stop writing and look at the clock, and my legs are crossed and tense.
judgement I think people will criticise what I'm writing and when they do I'll feel dreadful.
bodily sensations I'm aroused-my pulse is up, muscles are tensed, I'm sweating a lot.
experience of pleasure/pain It's nasty, negative.

This usage parallels the co-counselling term 'patterns', a word describing rigid, stereotyped, hard-to-change constellations of actions plus judgements and other thoughts plus bodily feelings and postures and gestures: all experienced as unpleasant.

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1. *exactly the same point holds for a term such as meditation.*

As a final indication of our frame of reference, note that in teaching co-counselling Rose and myself typically focus on the learning of new things, on change: and on blocks to change: and on what facilitates and allows change. We use the change process as a vehicle. We have a here-and-now-and-whats-next flavour, and perhaps put less emphasis on origins and development than some other co-counselling teachers.

Some Thoughts About Emotions And Feelings

Significance and nature of emotions

By regarding discharge as valuable we are implicitly saying that emotions themselves are of fundamental concern. This perspective is typical of growth and therapy methods. However growth processes do vary markedly in their strategies advocated for dealing with emotions.

This focus on emotion leads to a question: When we are experiencing emotion, what is going on? and why? Making use of the viewpoint mentioned previously, we can usefully say that bodily sensations are part of emotional experience. Emotions are whole-person events. However emotions don't **equal** bodily sensations. When, walking down the street, I say "I'm afraid of that large dog" I am regarding myself as threatened, I am acting by crossing the road, I am labelling the experience as subjectively nasty and negative, my body is aroused with blood pouring to my muscles and my heart pumping hard, and my attention is narrowly and rather obsessively directed on the dog.

Let's explore certain of the elements of emotion in more detail. Consider being able to become bodily aroused or completely quiet: being able to vary our state of awareness in many ways. . . focussed or diffused, free to wander or tightly directed, divided or unitary: and being able to label experiences subjectively as nice/nasty, positive/negative. . . all these physiological as well as psychological options are of great potential value in our lives. Thus if you are woken from sleep by an unknown noise on the stairs it is extremely **practical** to become bodily aroused (for fight or flight), to be obsessively aware of every creak and of nothing else (the moonlight can be enjoyed another time), and to experience the situation as nasty. Once having checked the staircase, and found that the cat had got out of the kitchen again, it is equally practical to be able to become bodily quiet (I need my 7½ hours), to let attention move away from the outside world, and to experience the warm bed as a 'nice' place.

Not to be able to respond to life with emotion is a major limitation. On the other hand if our emotions are aroused in ways quite unconnected with our current situation; or if this afternoon we seem stuck with this morning's emotion, then this too is inappropriate behaviour, and limiting.

Such a view of emotion as including potentially valuable bodily states and motivation is certainly not the whole story. Bodily feelings are typically

experienced as aspects of emotions which themselves have many meanings and functions. Not least, emotional expressions act as powerful signals to other people. The emphasis of this essay however is on the intra-personal significance of emotion and feelings, rather than the interpersonal. This is not to say that working on our own growth lacks interpersonal consequences. For example, the emotional signals we make to others will alter as our own emotions shift.

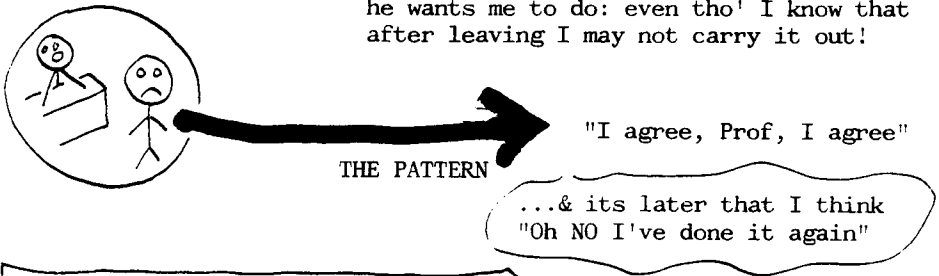
Emotions and Patterns

Earlier I mentioned the co-counselling term patterns, used as shorthand to describe rigid and maladaptive ways of behaving and feeling which however are so hard to alter. In common with many other change systems co-counselling considers that patterns inevitably involve negative emotions. Dealing in some new way with the negative emotions is found to be an effective way of breaking the grip of the pattern, and of facilitating our learning new ways of living in the world.

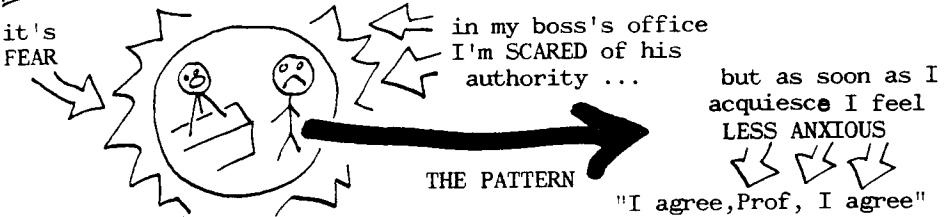
A discussion of discharge as a powerful way of dealing with negative emotions comprises a major part of this essay. At this point however I will merely enquire as to how do negative emotions maintain and support patterns?

When we think of how very effective we are at problem solving and at learning new ways of living, then the very existence of patterns may seem slightly strange. For instance, when I go into my boss's office I behave in a very rigid and predictable way: I'm patterned. . .

...my pattern is to AGREE with whatever he wants me to do: even tho' I know that after leaving I may not carry it out!



But why do I keep repeating this?
How do distresses maintain this pattern? ?



In other words there is a **payoff** for giving in. Namely feeling less frightened. Its true that the payoff is short-term, and that in the longer term there is a catch. But back in the office I **do** get rewarded for acquiescing (less fear), so I give in again. . . and again. . . and again. . .

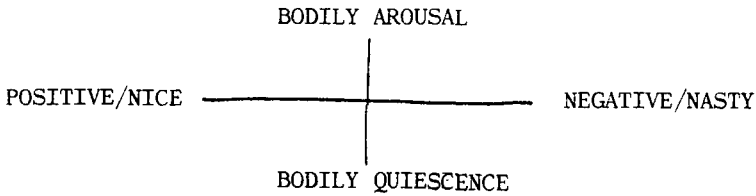
So here is one way, and there may be others, in which negative emotions could maintain patterned behaviour. So deal with the emotion and . . .

Some ways of mapping emotions

Recently Rose and I have been using various maps to represent aspects of our emotional space. We've used such maps to help clarify and guide our thinking and decisions in this area. Though such experiential maps are of course used by various writers (e.g. Plutchik, Tart) I will start with some background and explanation.

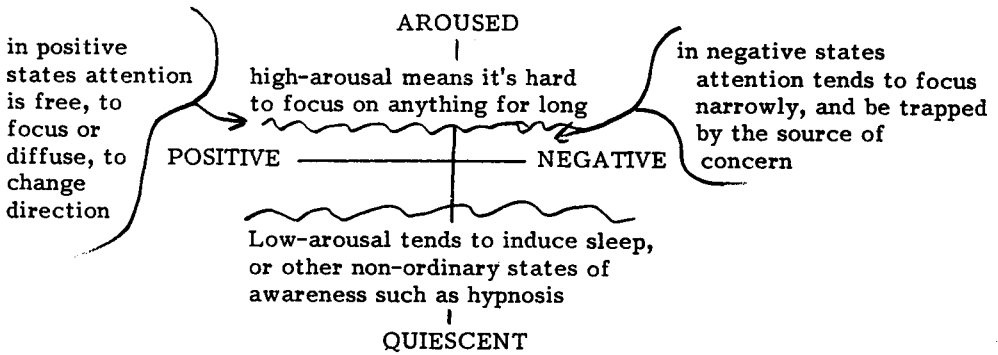
Of the many elements included in our experience of emotions we find the dimension of bodily arousal/quiescence and the dimension of pleasure/pain, nice/nasty of particular value when thinking about using discharge to aid us in changing and choosing our lives.

We can for example regard arousal/quiescence as the north/south line of a map of our emotional space; and nasty/nice as an east/west line on the same map. . . we are after all familiar with both active and passive, negative and positive experiences. Thus we can draw out a diagram:



By the way, I am not here using nice/nasty and positive/negative as equivalent to good/bad or appropriate/inappropriate. Both positive and negative subjective experiences can be useful: as personal, internal rewards for, or goads to, action. The good/bad aspects are discussed later.

An important extension of this map comes from noting the marked correlations between places on this feelings-map and **states of attention**, of awareness. So . . .



But what is the importance of this extension of the feelings-map? It is that positive and negative emotions typically involve quite different states of attention. Ignoring the extreme highs and lows of arousal, we can say that:

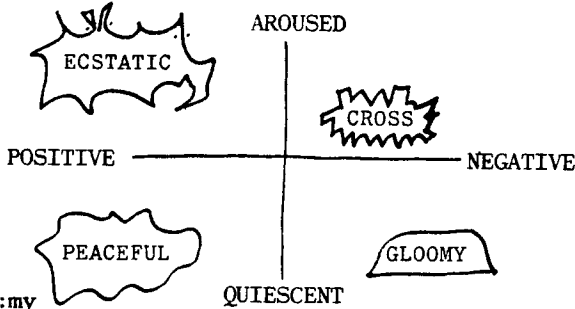
- during negative emotions our attention will be narrowly focussed, and we will find difficulty in changing the direction of our attention. 'Trapped attention'.
- whereas during positive emotions our attention is 'free', we can choose narrow or broad focus, and we can alter the direction of awareness.

Such differences can be very functional in everyday living. Short-term hazards typically evoke negative emotions, such as fear or anger, in which attention is trapped. When I'm running away from a bad tempered dog, noticing my shoes are dirty is a luxury I can't afford. Once escaped and feeling rather pleased with myself, my attention broadens, making it easier to remember that the dog always barks before he starts running, and to notice a little alley-way which just might avoid the dog altogether. The free attention, characteristic of positive emotions, is also very functional.

What are the connections between this aroused/quiet:nice/nasty map of feelings and the more complex emotions? After all it is mostly such emotions and their expression for which our language provides words. As an illustration I'll take a few words used to label some diverse emotional experiences: cross, ecstatic, gloomy, peaceful. Though such complex emotions cannot be placed onto the little map as such, certain aspects of each emotion **can** be plausibly localised, as follows:

I'm bodily aroused
 My attention tho'
 focussed is free
 to move & alter:
 feels MARVELLOUS

somewhat aroused bodily (tense
 muscles for instance): attention
 focussed narrowly on & trapped
 by the source of irritation: & I
 find it unpleasant to experience



relaxed body:my
 attention is free
 to wander &
 change: pleasant
 to experience

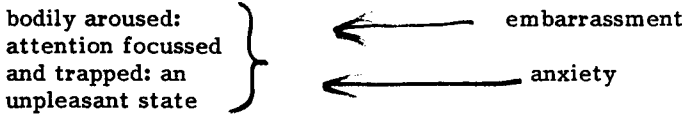
I'm bodily lacking energy:
 attention is narrowly
 focussed & trapped: not an
 enjoyable experience

Concepts such as these four emotion-words are acquired along with the rest of our language, in a language-using family belonging to a language-using species. Bodily feelings are perhaps less linguistic, though how much less is not clear. For such reasons, and because of the infinite variety of biography, **your** feelings during the emotional states I listed may be different to mine. . . are they? I'd like to know!

Finally note that two emotions which are clearly distinct may involve much the same bodily feelings. For example:

BODILY FEELINGS

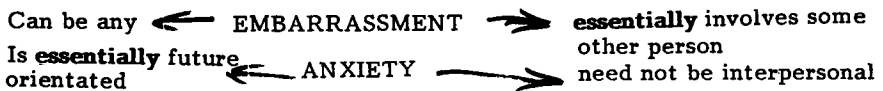
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE



The clear differences between such emotions lie outside their overlapping in the feelings-space represented by the map. To distinguish such emotions we could for instance note. . .

TIME CONTEXT

INTERPERSONAL CONTEXT



The type of map I've been discussing is indeed partial, without all the components of emotion mentioned earlier. But as a map it is useful. After all, a piece of paper showing only the coastlines of the continents nevertheless allows us to sail round the planet, avoiding rocks and shoals:

Can we always trust our feelings?

Well, I can't. More than in the past, yes, but I still find many of my emotions to be quite inappropriate. How am I defining inappropriate emotions? Not from my bodily feelings, they may be present even when the emotion seems spurious. No, rather from the relation of the emotion to my life as a whole. Thus I can experience emotion persisting long after the event which triggered it has changed, yet the emotion hangs around, preventing me giving my full attention to current events. I can also experience emotions whose intensities seem out of all proportion to the triggering events. Conversely I may be unable to feel, when emotion seems very apposite. Being unwilling or unable to become bodily aroused, to experience ecstasy or rage for example. Such occurrences or non-occurrences all seem to me inappropriate. Other marks of inappropriate emotions are the use of rigid and repetitive behaviour for their expression, often accompanied by other stereotyped thoughts and acts, commonly labelled neurotic behaviour; or in co-counselling jargon, patterns.

The whole idea of an emotion being appropriate or inappropriate, in a situation related way, is in effect a separate dimension of emotionality: quite distinct to those already discussed. Labelling an emotion as inappropriate because it does not constitute a whole-person response to here and now events does not imply that we should merely try and suppress such responses. Co-counselling agrees with many other growth methods in emphasizing that the first stage in any strategy for getting rid of inappropriate emotion is allowing yourself to experience it fully.

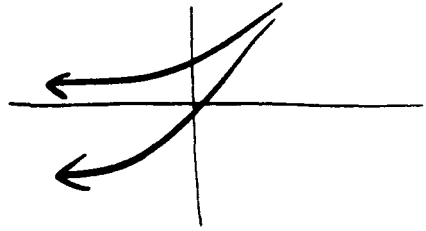
What is Discharge and How is it Facilitated?

This essay started with a sketched attempt to answer the first half of this question. I'll now approach the question again, this time using the feelings-map as a language, an image.

Discharge and the feelings map

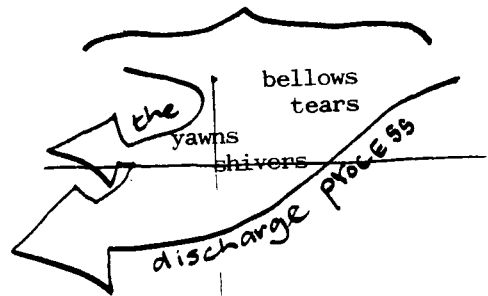
Various feeling-states were represented as places on the map. Analogously **discharge can be represented as a process of moving from one location in emotion space to another.** Discharge takes me from certain distressed states (i.e. bodily aroused, negative feeling states, where my attention is trapped on distress) across to certain non-distressed, rational states (less aroused in body, positive feeling states, with lots of free attention).

On the emotion-map I drew above this movement can be represented so . . .



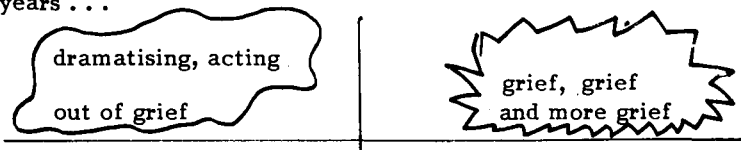
Now to add other aspects of discharge. For instance discharge seems to occur most readily when I am aware both of hurts **and** of my present safety: what Harvey Jackins called "a balance of attention".

balance of attention



As a reminder, the typical bodily events associated with discharge (tears and bellows and shivers and. . .) can be added on also . . .

This map can also be used to emphasize what discharge is **not**. Discharge is not distress for instance. When we're full of grief we may express this with tears, yet not discharge the emotion. Too distressed to have a balance of attention maybe? In such a case there is no movement across the map: I can grieve for years . . .



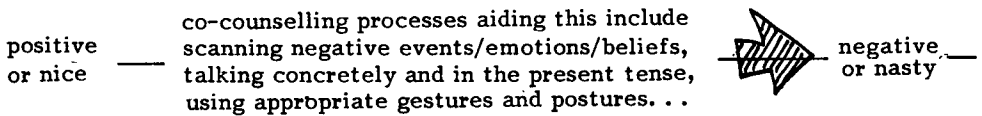
On the other hand we can simulate grief, engage in play acting, make snivelling noises, dramatize. Once again we lack a balance of attention, but this time because we are not truly acknowledging our hurts. So again, no movement, no discharge.

So discharge is not merely an outward expression of emotion. Nor is it using the expression of emotion to ask for help or to intimidate, since then turning-off the emotion depends on another person carrying out a desired action.

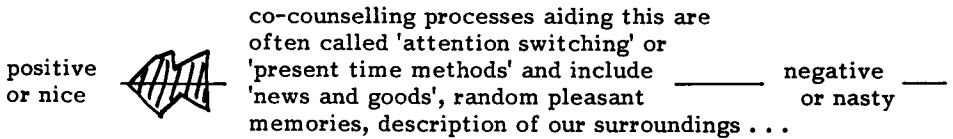
How the Processes of Co-counselling facilitate Discharge (see footnote)

Previously I've described the process of discharge as being most readily initiated when the person working has a balance of attention, acknowledging both hurts and present safety, and is in a state of bodily arousal. To achieve this condition co-counsellors can choose to direct their attention and to arouse their bodily energies.

Directing of attention If when counselling we are not significantly in touch with our distress, then initiation of discharge requires increasing our awareness so as to include our hurts . . .

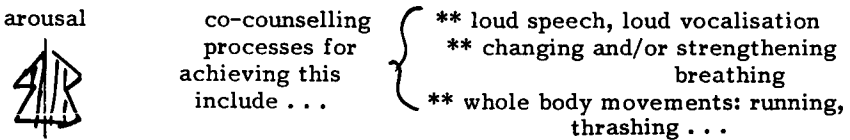


Sometimes on the other hand we are swamped by our distresses and hurts, and are too unaware of present safety to allow discharge. Now we need to increase our awareness to include present safety if we are to experience discharge .



With experience we learn to combine these processes, and so balance our attention.

Bodily arousal Sometimes focussing attention on distresses directly evokes arousal . . . "I'm thinking of the time I woke in the dark to find . . .". However, we may alternatively or in addition choose to arouse ourselves . . .

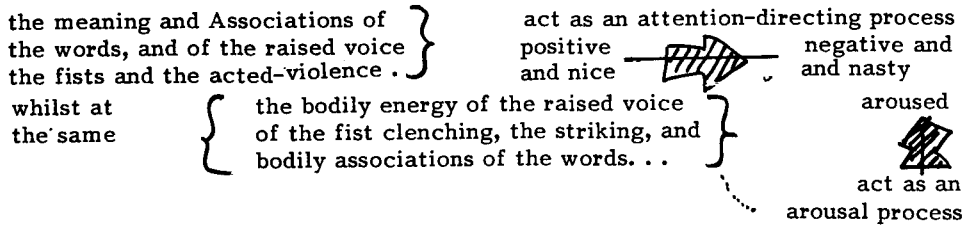


Some co-counselling processes involve all these 'units' together, plus other factors which this simple map cannot acknowledge. As examples of using the map to at least partially describe more complicated processes I'll discuss 'acting into' and 'contradictions'

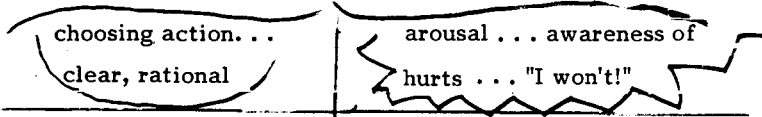
2. *this section presupposes some knowledge of co-counselling jargon, as for example outlined in Rose Evisons article.*

Acting into discharge This involves a kind of simulation of the physical actions of discharge: useful when clients notice that they are near, but not in, discharge. For instance I may be talking about my school days. I say "I will **not** do my homework" and notice that my fists are clenched, though I'm not discharging. So I 'act into discharge' by **shouting** "I will **not, no, no!**" whilst thrashing at a cushion with my fists . . . and sometimes this facilitates discharge.

Such a process can be viewed on the feelings-map, as follows:



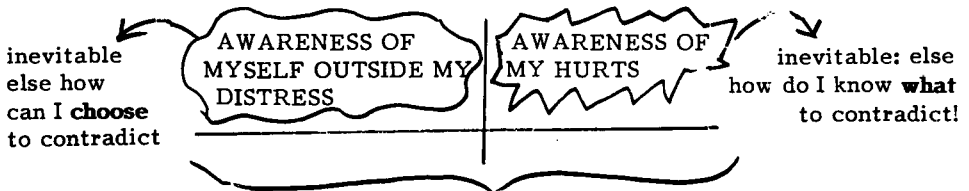
And since I am **choosing** to initiate the acting-into, I consequently have a part of myself in a rational, clear state outside my distress and patterns. Hence the acting into process imposes a balance of attention . . .



The process of discharge, I suggested above, is facilitated by bodily arousal and by a balance of attention between my hurt and my ok-self. Acting into aids achieving this state.

Contradiction is another powerful process. When we, as clients, deliberately and awarely contradict the postures/gestures/movements/expressions/words/ . . . of a 'distressed' action or feeling, then discharge often results. So if I find myself muttering miserably at my feet "No no, you take it, I don't really want it . . ." without actually discharging, I can contradict this. By: raising my head, straightening my back, and saying loudly and clearly "YES, I'll take it" or even "The whole world is mine of right" . . . and I shiver as I discharge a little fear.

This process of discharge can also be illustrated by the feelings-map:



and this provides me with a balance of attention . . .

CAN ALL FEELINGS BE DISCHARGED? AND SHOULD THEY BE?

Let's start by considering negative emotions. Some, like fear of being run over, or anger with a non-starting car, typically involve a measure of bodily arousal. Such emotions can (in principle) be discharged directly by shaking and storming until finally I reach a clear relaxed state again. Other negative emotions however involve being shut-down: gloom and boredom for instance. Such shutdown emotions do not appear to be readily dischargeable. However we can get a handle on them by noticing that shut-down emotions often seem to result from unavoidable or inescapable hurts. An example: I'm a schoolboy, and my teacher mocks me sarcastically. I'm unable either to express my fear (run away !) or my rage (shout back at him !). So I shut down and "feel bored with school". Boredom as such is not readily dischargeable, but if I focus on the origins of the emotion I'll find the fear and anger, which I can discharge. . . and this will in fact probably deal with the boredom. Yet other negative emotions (guilt, shame, disgust and so on) seem very mixed. Using the viewpoint that emotion words are shorthand (and maybe quite personal, even arbitrary or confused, shorthand) this offers no conceptual problem. Though I may not know how to discharge disgust as such, if for me disgust = fear + anger, or even = fear + anger + guilt, then I can certainly set about the fear and anger and guilt in the ways sketched above.

This account may be summarised, as follows:-

- *certain negative emotions may be discharged directly.*
- *to deal with mixed emotions co-counsellors often discharge the related simple emotions.*
- *the co-counselling processes enable us as clients to work our way towards underlying distresses without knowing ahead of time just what these are.*

Sometimes people ask "Can you discharge good (or nice or positive) emotions, if they don't seem appropriate? Our current view is that discharge is a process to take us from aroused-and-nasty states to less-aroused-and-nice states. Hence we say that, by definition, positive emotions are not switched off by discharge. If however you consider your state of joyous abandon is in appropriate, say you are driving up a motorway in thick fog, then of course change the direction of your attention, aided by processes practiced in co-counselling sessions. Not by discharge though. Be that as it may, if I notice my inappropriate jollity, I may well ask just what is going on ?

Another comment people sometimes make is that discharge is a waste of diversion of our energies. If we are righteously angry we should not, they suggest, discharge such anger lest the demons abroad in the world go unopposed. Our thoughts here are various. Aroused, negative states are indeed sometimes useful, though with their characteristically restricted focus of attention they seem best matched to short-term hazards. It is of course quite possible to be aroused and in positive states: and to deal with life's oppressions we may need plenty of bodily energy but also clear and wide ranging awareness, typical of positive states. People are usually most effective at problem solving when

they are on the positive side of the map. Note also that emotions such as righteous anger involve value judgements and are in no way merely bodily feelings. Another relevant issue is that remaining bodily aroused for long periods is tough going, and may result in stress illnesses. A useful distinction here is to note that the emotion of anger does not of necessity involve chronically angry bodily feelings. Finally, yes, we can discharge our distresses, feel better, and then refuse to look at the source of the hurts: whether these are internal, in us, or external oppressions. And, yes, when I do this I may sometimes regard myself as copping out.

But why should Discharge change our Lives?

So far in this essay discharge has been described as a process which transforms distress states into zestful or peaceful positive states. These transformations involve alterations in bodily arousal, and in states of awareness, and in positive/

negative feelings. Such shifts are described by some as "discharge changes my feelings" and by others as "discharge alters my state of consciousness". Making such shifts is a useful skill in itself, one which most people in our culture have suppressed. However, in addition to such short-term changes, discharge is also claimed to help alter our behaviour and judgements and perception in life at large.

Which is a very different claim.

Discharge as a tool for life-changing

Here I will explore ways in which discharge, an emotion-shifting process, may somehow be used to change lives on the larger scale, in the longer term. Discharge can be a tool for change because . . .

- (a) *Discharge allows us to explore and appreciate important but hurtful areas of our lives.*
- (b) *Our bodily and mental states immediately after discharge are very suited for learning and creativity.*
- (c) *Discharge provides us with a direct alternative to patterned actions.*

Each of these major threads will now be discussed in some detail.

(a) **Exploring hurtful areas.** Discharge allows us to explore areas of our lives which are associated with distress. Consequently we can gain access to information previously largely inaccessible. This exploration process probably depends on the fact that discharge transforms negative emotions without removing our attention from their content. To see just how significant this is, compare discharge, involving a balance of attention with a full acknowledgement of distresses, with attention switching methods which deal with distress by directing attention away from it.

As a personal example consider that for many years I was extremely anxious when I spoke in public. As a consequence I would mutter at my feet or at the ceiling instead of clearly addressing the members of the audience. Indeed my anxiety was so strong that I just did not want to think about the situation at all. I found it difficult even to rehearse my talks in advance. My first attempt to interrupt this distressed pattern of behaviour was by switching my attention. Instead of feeling my fear, I would remember the delightful meal I had eaten, or admire the view through my window. My pulse did fall from 140, I did become much less of a mutterer. But in between talks I gave the matter no thought. It was too anxiety provoking! So the next time I spoke, the pattern was still operating and I had to switch my attention again. . . and again . . . and . . . Eventually I got around to counselling about this. Aware of my supportive counsellor I allowed myself to evoke the in my stomach, out and anger. I shook and shuddered and shouted. Then I felt find, and could take myself back in imagination to the lecture theatre again . . . and discharge . . . and feel fine. . . and back again . . . again . . . again . . . This process of recycling through the hurtful scene, made possible because the discharge kept transforming the distress, pulled out and clarified more and more information. I remembered I'd been afraid of public performances for a long time: my school teachers, some of them, had truly mocked me, and had told me I was wrong and stupid. But gathering such information out of my past inevitably clarified how different the present is! Now I speak because I know more than most of the listeners, they have asked me to talk to them, so of course they are not going to insult me.

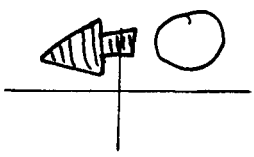
After this comparison of attention switching with discharge it is further illuminating to compare discharge with directly focussing on the details of 'a problem'. Such attempts are often difficult to carry out, as the factual details required to sort out the problem are strongly associated with hurtful emotions. If we nevertheless force ourselves into the distressful memories then our attention will tend to be trapped by the negative emotions. And such a narrow awareness is not an effective state for original thought or for problem solving. These various responses to distressing events can be represented on the feelings-map . . .

I need to think about events which evoke or involve negative feelings. . .

If I merely 'force myself to think or act, then I may well

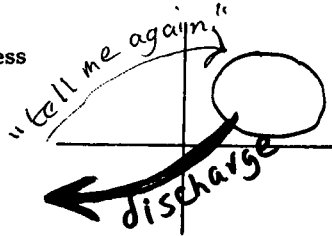


If I deal with such distress by attention switching, well I won't be distressed any more



. .but the price is that I will no longer be aware of just those details I need to deal with the distressing situation !

If I discharge the distress however, I will have a balance of attention and



I can cycle thro' and thro' the scene ("again") finally ending up on the positive side of the map with a haul of information gained

(b) Effective learning after discharge. After discharge we are typically in a state of free attention. Over on the positive emotion side of the feelings-map our attention is freed from narrow preoccupation with distressing events and scenes. Free to alter in direction and in focus. Fine for making new connections, just right for exploring new possibilities. Co-counsellors often use their after-discharge time for action planning, or for creative acts maybe more difficult at other times.

In fact the gaining of insights and new ideas, and the recovery of buried information, was so characteristically an outcome of discharge that the original co-counselling network called (and calls) itself **re-evaluation** counselling.

(c) Replacing pattern by discharge. Discharge provides quite another pattern breaking possibility, since the discharge process is itself often a real and immediate alternative to going on being distressed. Many distresses, once triggered, carry on interminably: pushing us into actions no longer relevant, distracting us from present reality. In such situations discharge is itself a preferred alternative, after which we can get on with life.

For years I helped a colleague teach a course in which I was an underworked, second class citizen: and I felt bored and resentful, both during the class and for the rest of the day. Then I tried slipping out of the class for a few minutes, going to my office and thumping a chair whilst telling it exactly what it could do with its class. I felt much better. After a couple of episodes of this I still didn't enjoy the class but once it was over I could get on with other work for the rest of the day without having to whine and grumble. After a couple more discharge episodes I realized that my presence really **was unnecessary**. So I found a useful way of spending my morning, and persuaded my boss to let me change. Two years of grumbling, without any constructive actions. All interrupted by a few minutes of discharge. Followed by the 'obvious' idea.

The various possible **consequences of discharge** can be summarised as follows:

Freedom from Hurts

inappropriate negative emotions can be 'turned off' by discharge

Interruption of Patterns

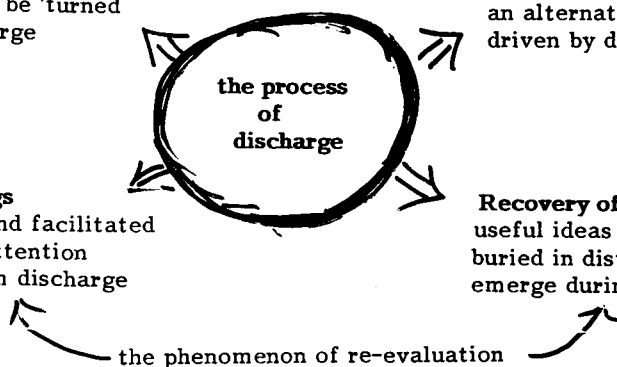
discharge itself provides an alternative to actions driven by distresses

New Learnings

encouraged and facilitated by the free attention resulting from discharge

Recovery of Information

useful ideas and memories buried in distress can emerge during discharge



How can we get the most out of discharge?

If the possible gains from discharge are as outlined above, how do we go about actualising this potential?

Once we have learned, or rather re-learned, to discharge with facility then using this to free ourselves from inappropriate negative feelings and to interrupt patterned actions is an immediate possibility. Our use of discharge for these ends can in fact become part of life at large, and not restricted to co-counseling sessions. Ingenuity is needed to disguise or conceal discharge, or to educate our fellows to accept our 'odd' behaviour. For instance, laughter is not too heavily frowned upon, though you may need an excuse. You may be told, a little indignantly, "You don't usually laugh at my jokes". You can cry in cemeteries. You can do almost anything in a car, as long as the windows are shut. Turn on a radio or a cassette player loudly and any room with a door is fine: it's sad but true that loud music is called ill mannered but tears are crazy. In fact more of your friends and colleagues and neighbours will listen to you than you'd imagine. Explain what you want and what you may do, reassure them afterwards! Offer to listen to them, with no demands of what they do.

However discharge *per se* does not ensure that we will make full use of the opportunities for new learning or for integrating the regained memories.

For instance we have to **be willing to give ourselves time:**

- for making connections between our discharge and the rest of our life.
- for exploring ourselves, skills as well as hurts. -for action planning,
- for action planning, and detailed commitment.
- for being actively creative,

and sometimes I find I am willing to spend time on discharging my fears, but unwilling to make plans for avoiding the distress generating situation. Or I have discharged my embarrassment about dancing, yet didn't dance.

Making connections is a critical process for making the most of discharge.

- Using techniques in sessions such as scanning and association.
- Moving out into life at large, holding directions, putting notices to myself on my mirror, my office wall, on tape.
- Future orientation is important, contracts for action, planning a week, month, year, decade. . .? ahead.

Remembering our insights and ideas and creative achievements may be hard!

- use posters and note books and tape recorders.
- and look, read and listen!

This essay started by noting the widespread use of discharge by a variety of therapies and growth processes. The bulk of the discussion has however reasonably enough centred around the use co-counselling makes of discharge. I will end by pointing out that many of the points and arguments developed here could, very probably, be applied to other change-systems: discharge is a very potent and powerful vehicle for personal and social change.

3. **Facilitation of discharge by lowering of bodily arousal?**

Sometimes discharge follows the lowering of bodily arousal. On reading a draft of this essay John Heron commented that this could occur with "relaxation and reverie techniques (of William Emerson), Eeman's relaxation therapy, some autogenic therapy methods, some meditation approaches, gentle caring massage, physical surrender into someones arms, and so on". And, yes, I've used relaxation in this way also, both as client and counsellor.

How may this phenomenon be seen from the perspective of the emotion map? In at least two ways, I consider. Firstly the client may be in touch with a distressing scene, and extremely bodily aroused. In such a situation bodily relaxation, and appreciation by another, may constitute a non-verbal way of generating a balance of attention: effectively a style of contradiction. Alternatively the client may be using bodily arousal (eg chronic muscular tensions) as part of a control pattern or as a style of dramatising: in this case the aroused behaviour is blocking awareness of the same distress. In such circumstances bodily relaxation may interrupt the control pattern of dramatisation, allowing the client to become aware of his distress.

Such a viewpoint does emphasise that facilitation of discharge involves more parameters than merely the bodily arousal and the nice/nasty dimensions, significant though these are.
