

**Gaie Houston**

## **KNITTING PATTERN FOR A BULLET-PROOF VEST**

A few tips for turning plough-shares into swords.  
How to succeed among the enlightened.  
The art of killing good fights stone dead.  
Madden your friends.  
How to say 'Peace' in a way that starts a war.  
Insight as an Offensive Weapon.

Many people have for a good many years now been working in their several ways at the subject I trust to be suggested in these alternative titles. So at the outset I disclaim originality. All I seek to do here is to collate the discoveries of others, into what I modestly hope may be the foundation of a general code of practice, a frame-work, a set of guidelines, about how to use the learnings of therapy to insult and frustrate the laity.

These tentative jottings are not in order of importance. I greatly hope that readers will contribute to them their own observations, after which we may arrive at a comprehensive schema.

### **Case One**

A white-faced person approaches you and points out in a controlled voice that you have left your car parked across their driveway for a whole morning. The person adds an auto-biographical note, to the effect that he or she is a doctor who is on call at the time, and requests you to move your car.

Do not do so. You might, if you did, easily leave yourself feeling unfulfilled. Instead, face the person with reassuring gentle friendliness, and say, "I'd like you to get in touch with what you're feeling". It is clear to you that you are dealing with a defensive person, and sure enough, nine times out of ten you will hear them using the defence of Denial with their next breath. "Leave my feelings out of this", may be the answer, "and move your car". Your correct response to this is, "You ask us to leave your feelings out. But I don't think you're leaving your feelings out. What is the message of that tense jaw?" The conversation may proceed thus;

**Person:** "I have just been called to a road accident".

**You:** "Do you notice that you are distracting yourself from your feelings?"

**Person:** "Move your car or I shall scream".

**You:** "Yes that's wonderful! Get into those feelings! Really scream!"

It is unusual for the person to concur with this therapeutic request. On the other hand, you may be bitten.

Then you can tell the subject about oral aggression and acting out.

### **Case Two**

A person approaches you and expresses a strong negative response to some conduct of yours on the preceding evening, say, breaking their window, eating the rest of the chocolates, having sexual relations with their spouse. All that you need to do is to gaze at them in silence for some seconds, and then say quietly, with only the slightest reproof in your voice, "I wish you could have told me at the time." Then glide off, forgivingly.

With the middle classes, who seem specially sensitive to the shame of violating game-rules, this response seems a winner. I have frequently seen it used, and always marvelled to see it instantly produce that opposite of the *aha* experience - what I term the *glug* effect.

### **Case Three**

A colleague or family member complains to you in feeling terms of your unsatisfactory personality and behaviour. You have repeatedly broken your promises to them; you have lied; you have gossiped about them; you have taken credit due to them; and so on and so on.

An old-fashioned approach would be to explain to them about the Element of Projection, and suggest that they repeat all they have just said about you, but this time in terms of themselves. Although considerable insight may be gained from this exercise, the amount of resistance you provoke in suggesting it may be wearisome to you. So I suggest instead the modern, ultimate defence, Acceptance.

Mr. Blaster Bates, the explosives expert, tells a memorable tale of a certain cess-pit he was called on to exterminate with dynamite. He describes it as so ancient and over-full that it rose above a field like some nightmare brown meringue. He tip-toed towards it, and had the sense of its Presence. He cast a stick of dynamite into it. The dynamite disappeared, swallowed into the glaucous depths, and, says Mr. Bates, the cess-pit chuckled.

Be that cess-pit. When your interlocuter hurls abuse into your midst, swallow it without a trace. Say, "Yes. I am like that, I'm always breaking promises and gossiping and lying." But be sure to say so in an interested, observational way, the way in which one might acknowledge that the wrens seem to be nesting in the laburnum tree again this Spring. Do not show regret. Above all, do not wring your hands, change colour or weep as you allow the dark

side of your nature into the light. Instead, if you are of a conversational disposition, you may add, "It's my Adapted Child reacting to your Critical Parent!" With this brilliantly economical sentence you implicate the other party in the affair and quietly imply that it is somehow their fault that you go on in this unsatisfactory way. And by the subtle, "It's my . . . ." you at the same time remove the whole interchange from anyone's responsibility. Your Adapted Child, along with your front doormat and your pet parrot, are objects with but tenuous connections with the inner reality that is you.

Some psychologists have already rushed into print to point out the devastating effect self-acceptance can have on others. They re-name it Fogging, and advise it as part of what they euphemistically call Assertion Training. Believe me, it is no such crittur. It is a maddener of the first water, guaranteed to produce teeth-grinding, peptic ulcer, angina pectoris and athlete's foot in all but the most insensitive hearer.

A warning note. Do not confuse the self-acceptance advocated here with that softened-up state which precedes personal change. I speak rather of a complacent narcissism which the more robust subject may be able to maintain, unpolluted with self-doubt, unshaken by the weakening effects of empathy, until the moment of death. (Which may come violently, by the hand of another.)

#### **Case Four**

You follow the needs of your inner being by whistling under your breath while those around you listen to a symphony concert. Or you pick your teeth at table and at length. Or you click your retractable ball-point pen repeatedly, as a personal aid to meditative calm.

A witness confesses irritation. He elaborates. He speaks of being driven to frenzy, of being ready to run up the wall and tap-dance on the ceiling, from sheer frustrated impulses to murder you as you whistle or pick or click.

Tell him relaxedly that what he chooses to do with his feelings is entirely his affair. If he wants to annoy himself with your behaviour, he is quite at liberty to do so. Having said this, continue with what you were doing.

You may judge your effectiveness by whether the witness then utters strangled cries, pounds the wall with his fists, or tears out lumps of his hair. All these outcomes are evidence of victory. The coup de grace you may choose to administer is to give a short process comment on the witness' latest response, pointing out, for instance, that it is a good example of retroflected behaviour.

If the witness is aggravating enough to react to your first explanation by discarding his bad feelings and showing indifference to your continued whistling etc., then change your tack. Speak to him of alienation and loss of affect,

of the impoverished emotional life of Western society, and of the need for levelling and honest confrontation.

### **Last Case**

So far I have described reactive behaviour. The true maddener, though, needs a range of preactive techniques as well. Perhaps the most devastatingly successful of these is the Mournful Prognosis. For example, you make impassioned advances to a new acquaintance, who becomes transformed with delight, and develops strong positive feelings for you. You then sigh, take their hand or other convenient portion of their anatomy, gaze at the ceiling and say, "I shall make you miserable. It's my pattern. In six months you'll wish I'd never spoken to you." The remarkable fact is that a statement of this kind generally calls up every fibre of stubbornness in the person addressed. Instead of leaping away at the horrid idea you have presented, he or she is a great deal more likely to deny your powers of misery-making, and out of some foolish pride, to allege that this time will be different.

*Make sure it is not.*

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## **THE PAST LIFE EXPERIENCE**

This article was written by Sue.Hinton after attending two Past Lives Workshops led by Joe Wesolowski, and from subsequent conversations we had together on this topic.

*"Perhaps I have lived before  
In some strange world where first my soul was shaped,  
And all this passionate love, and joy, and pain,  
That come. I know not whence, and sway my deeds,  
That this world stirs within me . . ."*

**George Eliot - The Spanish Gypsy**

I lost my life on a fabulous sunny day, six or seven thousand years ago, on a high plateau on a far continent, when someone plunged a dagger into me - the sacrifice.

This year, in an austere Victorian London building, lying on the floor during a past life workshop, I let out the screams of terror and anger that I had kept within me since that time. As I relaxed the hold that those feelings had over me, the sun came out again. Its warmth and light played across my face, though the tall grimy windows faced north and outside it was raining.