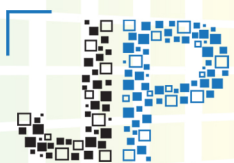


In Bed with my Therapists; And People in Relationships

Samuel Ochieng



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Abstract

“All stories are similar, from one culture to another and it is the stories that bring about our human similarities. If a person understands that all stories are similar and it is the characters within the stories that differ, and gives an understanding to that story, then a person can understand any culture.” This book intends to provide an understanding of working in an area of counseling, that up to now, has been treated very “politically correct” and delicately. The book will tackle issues of being politically correct and the impact that it has on a group of people. Whilst accepting that it may be viewed by some that there can be some negative aspects, these are far more livable than the wrong doing that is brought about by a pretence and avoidance, perpetuated in aversive connotations.

The book audience’s therapists or one who wants to go into the field of relationship interactions. Basically, anyone who is interested in relating to anyone else. It indulges a perspective of the western therapist, through the eyes of the writer, their doubts, fears and experiences. The book highlights what therapists are not saying and possibly should; and, what is being said to the general public, along with the agendas behind words. It tackles issues that therapists in the field or new therapists entering the field, should to be made aware of. This is the “Gerry Springer Effect” to what the media and political agendas have unleashed to the general public.

In the same way, some therapists have been absorbed in the “adrenalin rush” without properly assessing what is actually being said or is happening. Others have used this to further their own agendas if not themselves. To have an awareness of culture consciousness has nothing to do with race or ethnic background as it is looked at presently. I would like this book to be regarded by those who read it, as accepting similarities and differences with the knowledge that a flower garden looks beautiful because it is sensual and nurtured from a fertile bed.

Introduction to Culture-Conscious Counseling

For those who have had the luxury of an academic insight into the world of therapy, there may be the thought that when looking at the term culture, with all that it brings, in what could be called “main-stream” thought. That is, there is the tendency to look at culture and race as being fused, interlocked, and connected. For those who have been brought to the therapeutic arena through a series of courses, life experiences and circumstances, there might not be clarity about culture and race and therefore bring about a tendency to “avoid” the area. Then there is the world of “professional therapists”, with years of experience and academic backgrounds who for one reason or another preaches the singular culture model within the therapeutic process. Those stand on a pedestal and advocate that race and culture are not important. However, it is the issues that are of concern. These are generalizing in order to bring about a point.

Somewhere within the linear spectrum professional, and the general public, allocate themselves. There seems to be some accepted professional format for all. Policemen do it, doctors do it, politicians, media personnel, and anybody who puts themselves on the pedestal of being professional. It would go as far as saying that it is done in such a manner, so that there is no “sense of relationship” between the professional and whoever it is that they are dealing with.So we fight wars. We send others to their deaths because professionally we have lost the ability to communicate. To reach out and touch someone at a level that we can resonate with them.

Where have all the soldiers gone?

Long time passing.

Where have all the soldiers gone?

Long time ago.

Where have all the soldiers gone?

They've gone to graveyards, every one.

Oh, when will they ever learn?

Oh, when will they ever learn?

* Pete Seeger, 1956

The above point will be returned to in a later chapter.

There is an area of the therapeutic practice that has incurred the label of “cross-cultural counseling”. It seems to rest on its own. It is not taught in main stream Counseling or in Psychology. There is something of a “mystery” in this area that is perpetuated by “professionals” within the field of Psychology. Alternatively, it has been seen as an area that has been taken up by “ethnic minority therapists”. Entwined within, is the counseling approach that is labeled “Multicultural Counseling”.

Whatever the wrapping, the category within the therapeutic world, is left on its own. The media love the word Multi - Cultural and Ethnic Minority. Those who have not explored these terms use it daily, not realizing an implication of the impact that phrases may have on a people. In some references it could be reinforcing and indignity set by those who should be in a more advisory role,

manipulated by the media and exploited by politicians. Let's break a few egg shells.

The word ethnic means;

Main Entry: ethnic

Pronunciation: 'eth-nik

Function: adjective

Etymology: Middle English, from Late Latin ethnicus, from Greek ethnikos national, gentile, from ethnos nation, people; akin to Greek Ethos custom

Date: 15th century

1: Heathen

2 a: of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background <ethnic minorities><ethnic enclaves>

b: being a member of an ethnic group

c: of, relating to, or characteristic of ethnics <ethnic neighborhoods><ethnic foods>

This is in accordance to Merriam - Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003).

According to the etymology, the word means national, as in a person belonging to a nation. It is common fact that today's Britain is made up of peoples from various backgrounds. English, Scots, Irish, Welsh, Italian, Scandinavians, Eastern European, Turkish, Greeks, Germans, Americans, Asians, Africans, Australians, Saudi Arabians, New Zealanders, Japanese, Koreans, Russians, Thailanders, Indians, Pakistanis, Jamaicans, Barbadians,...and the list goes on. We can divide and sub-divide each one of these backgrounds. We can also mix any of these backgrounds and it will apply to a group of British nationals. What is being said is, the term ethnic minority can apply to any one of these groups or a mixture of any combination of these groups. However, the media and the politicians use it for a specific group, to pin point a group. The use of the phrase, “peoples of different backgrounds”, is specifically to differentiate from the term culture, which will be explored later.

In the second part of the definition, according to racial grouping, here a person has to be very careful about what they mean by Race. On this planet, there is only one race when it comes to humans and that is the Human Race. However, for political reasons it has been sub-divided and sub-divided again to suit the needs of those who want to use it to address a specific agenda. Skin Colour. The “us and them” syndrome that is played out on several levels to suit the ends, whatever those ends may be. On going back to the idea of “national” and the circle continues. What is being advocated is that the use of the phrase, ethnic minority is towards the abuse and miss-recognition of a group of nationals. The term itself is a falsification because if a nation is made up of several small groups of people, then the nation is either composed of a converging of ethnic minorities or, the phrase is targeted for a specific use.

On turning to the idea of multi - cultural and what is being addressed by this phrase. In a way, the phrase has been addressed, but now it would impact well to be viewed in the area of the counseling therapy. A great injustice may have been done to the general public by adopting this phrase from the media. The media and politicians have politicized the phrase, in the political limelight. In the therapeutic arena, it has the calling for a disaster, and yet it is hardly brought to the fore front. As therapists, there is the moral obligation to educate our public, as is there the responsibility, if not accountably to our clients and the general public. To those coming up in the field, there is the moral responsibility of 'to know and to question'. First and foremost, there can never be a separated aspect to therapy that is labeled as multi-cultural counseling. The "lie" that exists with the phrase, within the academic circles should bear some questioning and also take up a measure of responsibility towards its furtherance.

In life, as in therapy, people are constantly in relationships, whatever that relationship may be. People are in relationship with partners, with work colleges, with other people they come across, with the shop-keeper, with the person at the till, with the person in the next car in traffic, with the people they wait with at the bus stop, with the cyclist, with the bank manager, with the prisoner, with the thief, with the movie star, with a pet, with their enemy, with everyone else in the world. The human race exists in a perpetual state of being in relationships. Life cannot exist otherwise. The human element. The call to be in relationships to others, whatever that relationship or other may be. If we as a people and more importantly as therapists, do not give recognition to the factor of perpetual relationships, then there may be harm caused to the general public. Therefore therapists, as people, are in a perpetual constant state of differing cultural proximities. As a therapist, when I go to see my therapist, we form three immediate cultures.

The cultural proximity of the therapist, my cultural proximity and a "third cultural proximity" comprising of the relationship between myself and therapist. Other cultures that come together in this meeting are; we both belong to the "car culture". From the moment that she said "how are you getting here" and I said that I would drive, we were in rapport because we had established a common cultural means of communication about travel. Also established in this is everything else that goes with the "car culture". On this level we speak the same language. The inter-relationship is in a state of continuous evolution encouraged by the relationship the exists between client and counselor. It is the same for life and any relationship, whatever that relationship may be. -a spontaneous encounter, a chance meeting, an arranged meeting, a brief meeting of eyes in a crowded train, tube, bumping into another person and exchanging words, a board meeting. All of these are acknowledgements of encounters at some level.

The term multi - cultural counseling can never be a study on its own because by nature of existence, our dynamics as human beings is multi - cultural. This raises the question of defining culture. Before defining what culture is or is not, let me explore

the idea of culture. To help in this exploration I will start at a base level. Cultures; There are those who belong to the pedestrian culture, there are those who belong to the bicycle culture, there are those who belong to the farm culture, there are those who belong to the taxi culture, those who belong to the car culture, there are those who belong to the air travel culture, those who belong to the bus culture and cultures who participate in one other culture, people who participate in several cultures, people who participate in all cultures etc, etc.

Then we can relate these to cultures of those who drive specific type cars or ride specific type bicycles, cultures of those who wear certain type of shoes, cultures of those who catch a specific bus, train, tube. These are cultures. As therapists we have to recognize these cultures and have the awareness that each has a different perspective, of which we must be familiar with. A client who comes to a counseling session on a bus will ask where the nearest bus stop is, and what are the times of the buses. A client who walks would want to know the distance. A person who drives to a session would want to know if there is parking. The point is that we as therapists are already in the process of multi-cultural counseling long before we start to politicize it. It has to be given recognition and taught not only to practicing therapists, but also to the general public.

The human condition is that of continuous relationships. The instant moment that one individual makes contact with another, they are engaged in a relationship, no matter how short and no matter how long. The manner of the relationship is then defined by the people engaged in it. Here is an example. When a person is about to sit opposite or next to someone on a train, tube or bus. The first things that would go through their mind, is the visual sensation, then it is smell, then it is verbal, something like "excuse me, can I sit down". Whilst the sensations are picking up key points, another sense has begun its role, and that is the emotional, e.g. "Is it safe for me to sit next to this person". The auditory sense is receptive and the whole body prepares for a reaction, whatever that reaction may be.

Senses begin picking up messages and for those few seconds a person is engaged in that relationship. In this engagement the person has already been read, and assumptions made, rightly or wrongly. Also from their perspective, they have experienced mostly the same on a plane, as the "relationship is negotiated. It is a form of sensory input that is in constant flow, whatever we are doing and on every level, it connects all human beings. An attempt to step outside of the dimension of sensory input and present an unemotional involvement leads to a discourse with our own internal system. Therefore in saying that in order to present a professional persona at work, we have to be detached, is to be in discourse, a wrong doing on several levels. On one level it is a wrong approach to the person/s that you are attempting to communicate with. On a psyche level, the detachment has already been read. On a human level is brings discourse to any attempts at communicative conversation.

It would be beneficial if therapists were to be in a harmonious relationship with our clients. That is, being

professional enough in our approach to let our human qualities interact, and not be afraid of our own emotions within that interaction. Professionalism can then be seen as, how two or more people interact on a human basis as opposed to an image of what professionalism is. Then as therapists, there may come the need to educate other professionals on what communication actually is. The damage that has been done by the so called multicultural therapists rests on the wrong doing by Counselors and Counseling organizations adopting a political line to a non political situation and has perpetuated this wrong for whatever means. It needs to be corrected, for otherwise as Counselors we cannot justify ourselves to the general public. The beginnings need to be made from the separation of political agendas and human agendas.

Pain is pain, on any level on any plain. Somewhere within the therapeutic culture, the idea of "Culture Free" counseling has come into being. An idea that reflects the idea that it is possible to engage in counseling and disregard the cultural background of the individual. Mentioned has been made of this briefly previously and will now be expanded. It is about perception and communication. Those who are of the "bus culture" will perceive things differently than those of the "bicycle culture". Those who use the train will perceive things differently to those who fly. Those who walk, pedestrian culture, will perceive things differently to those who drive. They will also relate differently and speak a different language patterns. Added on to this are factors of where the person is from, their nationality, and their cultural inheritance. A mixed bag of existence on several plains.

In order to establish any rapport with any individual from any one of these backgrounds then I must adapt to the language pattern that they are familiar with and also to tune into their many layers of cultural heritage. That is, have an awareness of the presentation of the issue on hand in relation the sex of the therapist and the client. This establishes the working alliance, the grounds upon which we meet. This begs the question; with all this happening in seconds, how can there be a culture free counseling format? The Clarkson "Five Relationship Framework" will be used to examine the Culture Free format. Without an established working alliance which is suitable to both parties, then there can be no therapeutic work done. Every individual carries with them a cultural heritage. It is what makes them.

To say that a therapeutic process can occur without the acknowledgement of the makeup of the individual is to miss that individual, and the therapeutic process. In order to engage within the counseling process, there has to be exchange at all levels. That process of exchange can only happen if there is the acknowledgement of the background heritage of the client and of the therapist, coexisting in a "created culture" of therapist and client. That is, from the two backgrounds of client and therapist, a third background is developed; - that of the client - therapist in co-existence. The transference and the counter transference relationship. The counseling process cannot develop here if it is "culture free".

The reparative relationship that exists inside and outside of the counseling process is a basic necessity for the human

organism to function on a normal day to day basis. It is the process whereby the human being over comes an "injury" either physically, emotionally or mentally. In order for this condition to exist then the individual must be in a relationship to someone else, whoever that someone may be. In the counseling process, it is with the therapist. If a relationship exists, then there has to be dialogue and in order for this to occur there need to be the recognition of backgrounds and cultural heritage.

"Culture free" counseling does not offer this and therefore does not offer a reparative process to engage. It is not possible to have a process that does not engage in the reparative process with the client in a counseling setting. All through I have either directly or indirectly spoken about a person to person relationship, so I will just highlight it again. The human being is in a constant state of being in relationships. These relationships are continuously arranged, assessed, evaluated, through encounters with others. It begs the question; How can there exit a culture free form of person to person communication when the process of communication is engulfed with the person to person culture?It can't be done.

Culture free counseling without a purpose or meaning in life. I would have to say that this is impossible, for in looking at the idea of "culture free" and "purposeful existence", both of these cannot exist outside a culture. Although I have said that culture free counseling is not possible, I would like to separate this from the idea of "culture free". This is a paradox because by claiming to be culture free, that very existence creates a culture. A culture of "culture free" state of being. However in counseling, it defies the whole purpose for counseling. The transpersonal is an essential basic part to the world of counseling. It is where "worlds have meaning" to individuals even if that meaning is seen as chaos.

This leads to the term "culture", and what is meant by the term. It is not an easy word to find a meaning for and it has been greatly misused. It goes further than geographical setting, nationality, ethnicity and race. It is elusive and dynamic. For this very reason, when I started this chapter, I brought about the idea of car culture, bicycle culture, bus culture, train culture.....etc. For the purpose of this book, I will use the term culture to mean, "A share structures of feelings and doings." This would encompass the range from the "businessman pedestrian culture", to the singer, housewife farmer culture". Culture is a process and not place and form. It is dynamic. It is in constant change, flux within the individual. It is elastic in that when two people get together and meet; they form a third culture within that meeting.

That is, there is the cultural background of the first person, and then there is the cultural background of the second person. When these come together a third culture is formed. Should a third person join in this meeting, when seven cultures are formed. A fourth person gives way to sixteen cultures in existence. These are formed by how each person interacts with the next person and the group. Then how the group reacts to them individually. Culture is feeling and doing. When put in relation to surrounding, feeling and doing gives way to appropriateness and practicability. i.e. whilst reading a book and riding a bicycle may be pleasurable, doing the two things at the same time is not

advisable. Here two cultures have come together and formed a third culture, which is inappropriate in practicality.

Having defined culture in this manner, it then becomes clearer that the definition of cross-cultural counseling as it has been advocated by counselors and various institutions is for a political ends and not towards a counseling purpose. What is being played down is the concept of race and not culture. I use race here as it is politically used. There is a difference. Whilst race in the political sense is based on skin colour, and difference, in its true sense it explains human commonalities on a global scale. i.e. the pygmies of Namibia are genetically closer to western Europeans than the Irish*

Also what is being formed is the idea that anything that differs from the western model must be labeled differently and not incorporated into the main stream. This means that it is easier not to give full recognition to an essential part of present day counseling. This area in the political arena then becomes an add on, an essential. Somewhere between presenting a professional front and academic achievement, we as counselors seem to have lost the client and the needs of the client. We seem to have surrounded ourselves with theory, correct counseling procedures, note taking, supervision, therapy and all the other things that we do, so much so that, the individual needs of the client has been negated and in its place we have developed a counseling format of "one size fits all".

Again I am looking at the concept of culture free counseling, or anything that moves towards this direction. To date, in mainstream College counseling courses, there is nothing that teaches the awareness of the individual background. Counselors do not readily talk about this, as if to say, "people in glass houses should not throw stones". There are no glass houses, only the illusion of glass houses and since it is an illusion, let's throw some stones. Whilst in this field, let's stomp over the egg shells. If we as Counselors are afraid to address issues about our own forms of practice and where we fall short, upcoming counselors have no chance and the public is preyed upon. We become not therapists but "the rapists" of our own audience and clients. We have the responsibility to our clients and to the general public to give the best service possible.

Therefore we have got to look into ourselves and accept the changes. Societies are far more dynamic than they have ever been. The counseling audience is more complex in terms of cultural background and therefore we must look to develop ourselves for a more global position. The counseling cultures are divided into those of the Person to Person approach, those who are Holistic, Psychodynamic, Jungian, Freudian, Gestalt, Klienian, all working to help people. Where is the consideration for the person's background and the person in all this. Instead we note that the person is late and we put a label on that, or that they are early and again we label them. One that happens again and again, is that all encompassing problem of the client not showing up. This sends therapists up the wall. Can you relate to this?

Next time think of the person's circumstances and that they are human beings, who have not got themselves caught up in the ever important time rigid world of counselors/therapists.

Another quirk with counselors is the timing of ending sessions. The fifty minute hour. I would like Counselors, Therapists, Psychologists to look inward and approach that human part of them and admit, some people do not say it all in fifty minutes and may need extra time. I have come across clients who take about half an hour to say anything and then once they have started, there is no stopping them. Literally, they spill their guts. The human thing to do here is to let them do what they have got to do. Most probably it is the first time that someone has let them speak. Allow for the extra time by not booking appointments on top of each other.

If the session is due to end at 11:30am book the next client in for noon. This is a common occurrence where several therapist/counselors use the same rooms at different times. A booking will be from say 10:30am to 11:30am. The next booking would go in at 11:30am. Invariably what happens, one client stays in longer and then there is mayhem amongst "understanding counselors".

Patients my colleagues.....patients.

As a counseling culture, are we our worst enemies? I do not think so. Rather, I think that we have set ourselves some near impossible tasks, through our own illusions of being professional, and then attempting to aspire to that illusion. In here we have lost track of our human element. It could be worth looking into how many counselors have laughed with their clients. Shared a joyous moment in the session. Let your client know that you are human behind that façade of rigidity.

When I first started counseling, I was so "professionally rigid". I was so rigid that a client could throw a stone at me and I would not blink. I was so good, so professional that I would not even clear my throat. Nobody ever said that I was allowed to be human in my training. It was all by the book. More practically I was scared....stiff. That first client experience needs to be worked on. Thankfully over the years I have grown in confidence, become more relaxed and more attuned to the human element in counseling. I only hope that upcoming counselors are also being taught to be at one with their clients. They are human beings. It's us counselors that have gone all cyber. Does this compute?

So what do we do? I would like to explore this with you in this book and to look at positive elements to work with. Things that are around us, that we can use to assist us in developing, as better global counselors. I use the term global because this is what we must become. Globally aware of different levels of cultures, and different interactions. The reality of our present world today is the realization of how connected we are. As human beings we are in constant relationships. The existence of the internet is a physical demonstration of just how connected we are. If human beings did not desire to be in interaction and in relationships with others, the idea of the internet would not have been born. The Internet is the commercialization of our need to be in relationships, whatever that relationship may be.

We step out into the cold world that we have inflicted on ourselves, light our fires to keep warm in the hope that others may join us or that others are doing the same. We have to learn and be attentive to the world about us, separating fact from

fiction; media orientated phrases from personal knowledge, political adventurism to basic existence. With all this we also have to bear in mind that we are accountable. That is, we as in counselors, individuals, general public or professional. We have to bear responsibility for the inadequacy or misguidance of information that is perpetuated by those who inform us. I am of the belief that one should always question. Question until there are no more answers and then question this again, if it is understanding that is being sort for.

“The Zen Master warns: “If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!” This admonition point up that no meaning that comes from outside of us is real. The Buddha hood of each of us has already been obtained. We need only recognize it. Philosophy, religion, patriotism, all is empty idols. The only meaning in our lives is what we each bring to them. Killing the Buddha on the road means destroying the hope that anything outside of our selves can be our master. No one is any bigger than anyone else. There are no mothers or fathers for grown-ups, only sisters and brothers.”

All Stories are one story, told by a different person at a different place, at a different time. The complexity of culture will run its course as human beings continue to evolve. It is not a static existence. Culture is a dynamic state of existence that thrives off its own being. Along with this existence are “memories” of events, of a past that has been created and recreated. These “memories” will exist as long as humanity exists and will continue to be the basis upon which humanity perpetuates its existence. I am talking about ‘stories’, in whatever shape or form they may be presented in. This is the likes of myths, legends, fairytales, poems, parables, fantasies, folk tales and songs. That part of the human psyche that reaches out to other worlds to preserve the present moment to moment existence.

Every culture has a deep grounding in its own stories. This is what gives meaning, a sense of being and direction. Think about punk cultures, pop cultures, rock cultures, Indian cultures, Far Eastern cultures, car cultures, bus cultures, cultures within cultures. There will be a story in all these groupings that give the group something to bond with, if not to hold and to give some manner meaning. The international language of stories is that they bring together groupings of human beings and human beings as a group. These stories give meaning to existence, upon which a belief system is then founded. A purpose for existence is then taken from this and repeated over and over again through time. A difficulty comes when one group attempts to share its stories with another group that does not have the same set of references.

For example, if peoples of the punk culture attempt to tell their stories to the peoples of the bus cultures, there will be a problem of clarity in communication, if not language itself. However they may be understood by the punk bus culture. Or bike cultures attempting to explain a joke to pedestrian cultures from a biker’s point of reference. Something is immediately lost, misunderstood, if understood at all. One group may identify itself with stories of Ganesha, Yayati and Sudama, stories from India, whilst another group identifies with Troika, Kotura or Nikita, which are folk tales from Russia. Other group may relate to the Song of the Fallen Warrior and Black Pearl Myths from China.

Further on to this are the likes of the Greek myths like Demeter, Artemis and Hera. All stories are the same. It is the story teller that is different. To the extent that you can pick up a newspaper, read any story or a major head-line and it would have already been told in a story by a story teller at some place at some time within your life time. Take any story and the elements in it will be the same. There is the bad guy and the good guy. There is the great task that must be undertaken to achieve a near impossible end. There is the hero and the heroine, with an ending of some form of an everlasting reward. Within, are versions of magic, mystics and delusions? To make the story, this is the working alliance. These are the ingredients that a story needs and will use as its ground rules. The level playing field upon which all can be understood.

The difficulty comes when the field is not seen to be level and therefore the “players” are seen in a different light in a non-similar “game”. I use the term ‘non similar’ as opposed to different

because when talking about stories, in order for something to be different to it, then it becomes other than a story. A “non story” of sorts. For something to be different in it means it is not similar and therefore the intermediary phrase, non similar.

In day to day interaction, people hear stories all the time. Yet, few stop to notice the parallels and similarities. I am not aiming at the dissection of any story but rather, giving a time for reflection, a quiet moment for thought. There are stories in every language and every group of people. It could be interesting to try to notice one’s own knowledge of stories from others, outside their own group.

Taking it further, how many other groups can one link to with regarding a series stories? This can take on a life of its own, expanding in many directions and circling round on itself. At the point where all the stories link up, it then becomes one story, irrespective of the language that it is in and the character types that is included in the story. Let me expand on this. All stories have characters in them. The main character may be a person in one grouping. In another grouping it is an owl. Yet in another it is an ant. All of these are the same thing because it is ‘the main character’. This main character may walk in one group, in another they swim. Some group may have the main character flying and yet in another, they crawl. This is purely the means that the main character uses to get about, so all of these are the ‘same’.

It is a means of getting from “A” to “B”. Put in this light, the playing field begins to look level and the players begin to see that they are playing by the same rules. Taken to further lengths, there comes the realization that the game on hand is very much the same and very familiar. The difficulties are a matter of perception and if this is not initially looked at, then there will always be an aspect of a strange game being played on an unlevel playing field. This does not attract audiences. Let me bring this concept closer. When two people first meet, and they want to get to know each other, they spend a lot of time getting to know each other. Why is this? This question may seem obvious and so the thought on it is not explored. The obvious answer is “so they can get to know each other”, but what is actually happening? Within this exchange they are registering language patterns, accessing each other data bank and getting to know how the other person uses words and references.

These two people are creating a cultural reference point, learning the others’ language and thoughts. Within this creativity, sensors are awakening and feelings bond in a way that only feelings can bond. On another level this leads to the state of being in love. Two become as one, then all of a sudden, the other person, “understands me so well...” This then becomes their story. Two stories linking at points of sameness and merging into one. This story is then taken to another dimension as the field of play becomes level and the rules of engagement become familiar. The human condition of existence in stories, telling stories and relating to stories is perpetuated every single day by everyone. Take a story, any story, take your own life story and tell it to someone, or even just tell it to yourself. Then think about how that relates to a story that you may have heard before as a child, or maybe stories that you tell your children.

Then go and read a story or two from another group of people, different from your group. Are there any similarities? The dragon may have been replaced by an ant, the instead of crossing a river, the character crossed a desert, or instead of the wizard there is the fairy. The characters change form but the story is the same. It is how we relate to these characters that matter and the relating to the characters depends upon the geographical setting. A person from a cold place will relate better to bears and seals than a person from a warm place. Vice versa, a person from a warm place will relate better to giraffes and elephants than a person from a cold place. In being together and having a common bonding, through our stories, we cannot then say that we can separate ourselves by presenting a detached entity and call that being professional. This is an idea that defies the human relationship.

The groups of people that subscribe to this are mainly western orientated cultures. Look at the life styles that have come up in that part of the world. Look at the nuclear family units and whilst in this, look at the role of television within these family units. Switch off the television and there will be some form of numbing effect. In the western world, the television has become the greatest storyteller and those who view it have forgotten the process of engaging with people as people. Some where there is the notion that if television and all its networks were switched off for this group, there would be a stunned, scared culture and for the first time in a little over half a century, be confronted with having conversation with other family members and neighbors. I am stating this from purely an interactive social view and not from the technological view.

This is looked at from a general view covering a broad spectrum and should not be taken that every western person is like this. However, it would be worth giving it a thought. Once again, through the media, human detachment has been perpetuated and given the label of being professional. We as counselors have bought into this and 'forgotten' what the process of counseling involves. The so called professionals hide behind the labels because they are afraid of the human element in them. What is wrong with showing compassion? This again comes across when attempting to communicate with groups outside of one own grouping. The resistance to not understand that groups stories and how they interact, makes all communication impossible. There is no working alliance. Why counselors have bought into this, is a whole mystery, when they have the knowledge of how relationships work.

The academic institutes perpetuate this because they have lost their story-tellers. For them they have an "out" option. It is those who reside with the academic institutions that are accountable and guilty of not correcting a false hood. Professionalism and compassion go together in human relationships. Anything else is a false attempt in mirroring the big screen. Life has no screens, and when a child screams and cries out, it needs a mother's love and attention, nothing else. Chat show and talk shows thrive off of the position of the story tell. They are also the biggest form of daytime television interaction. There are millions and millions of people who watch these shows during the day and then try

and duplicate the events in their own lives in the evenings. Not that there is anything wrong with positive input, but when we become voyeurs of other people's lives and then rate ourselves with the events as seen on television, one has to wonder what is actually happening.

Chat shows are a phenomenon of the 21st century. Why do people go out of their way to wash their dirty laundry in public? In an hour, years of hostility seems to find some resolution. Is television becoming the magic wand?!? This is what the viewer sees and then they would write in, wanting their own resolutions. In this way the general public interacts with the "magic box". Soaps; stories that tug at heart-strings. Whole families are caught up in the drama of the soap and they live their lives through the soaps, adopting the television characters and always looking for more. In real life families do not talk. The art of communication is lost and the unit falls. Whole families can only relate through the characters in the soaps. Reality Television is the latest phenomenon. One step further then soaps. Somewhere someone had the idea of, "let's put real people in some "real" situations and see how they cope".

This to my mind is the perverted sick story teller. If anybody wants to see how people cope with difficult situations then why not go to real places like Ethiopia, Angola and Sudan, just to name a few. Yet they have viewers or rather voyeurs, people who would like to live their lives through watching others and fantasizing, bet, interacting with the "unreal situation" as if it was real life. Whilst it is good rating for television and some may argue that it is fun and it is what people want. This argument or point of view is alright to have. Just be sure that there is the acknowledgement of where "fun" and "reality" are not merged. What has happened to human interaction? What would happen if someone pulled the plug on the "magic box"?

"Hey Ricky, now mine is empty.
How about one for you
We could set it out together
Seems tomorrow is overdue
Captain Video, done went home
One pilot laid to rest
And dragon ladies talk that talk
About who loves who - who love best?
Silver bullets in the jukebox
Spin another round
Everybody at the back of the line
It's midnight at the lost and found..."

Meat Loaf; 1983: So the story teller has gone to another place and as human beings we, as counselors have sold into something else. We have failed our public. We have not taken time to go out into other people's stories and really hear what is being said. So Joe Public sells his story to the television and

magic moments begin to happen. A few minutes of fame and recognition, even if it is painful. We as counselors have kept to our groups whilst manifesting that we understand other groups. We have also been sold to the “magic box” by selling our services to these commercialized shows. We not only prey on the services of the show, but also get the benefits of commercializing our services.

To those of you who are upcoming counselors, take this as an opening point. Read up on stories that you were never

taught. To those of you who are practicing counselors, revisit your education and ask those questions that you did not ask way back when or questions that have come up regarding your own abilities, now that you have tasted what the world has thrown at you. Those of you going into “new” counseling experiences are you sure that you have the necessary material, background, induction?

The human element in all of us is that we are always in a relationship, whatever that relationship is. We are connected. I would like to reach out to you and give a model/structure that connects us all. We as Counselors are always in that hazy middle ground with our clients. We take in their story and we come in with our story and meet the client in a “third” area where we interact. I call this area “Skia”, which is the Greek term for shadows and silhouettes. This is world of the counselor when s/he is with a client and this is where the “work” gets done. I have gone on and called the whole process, Skiatism - The process of working within shadows and silhouettes.

Every story has three basic elements: Type, Gender and Effect.

That is, what type of story is it? What are the genders of the characters and what effect does this story have.

	Power	Power
TYPE -----	Cunning	Cunning--- TYPE
	Truth	Truth
	Male	Male
GENDER -----		----- GENDER
	Female	Female
	Flying	Flying
EFFECT -----	Falling	Falling----- EFFECT
	Imbalance	Imbalance

Within each of these sections are other elements. Within type, there are three elements and these are Power, Cunning and Truth. The three elements ask the question, Does this Type of story use Power, Cunning or Truth as its main ingredient? The second category is gender. This is the gender of the main character in the story. The third category is Effect and this is divided into three categories. Flying, Falling and Imbalance. Flying would include anything up lifting, including the act of flying. Falling would be anything down-casting including the act of falling. Imbalance refers to any act of being at dis-equilibrium. A sort of drunken experience.

Here is an interesting case study to map on to the above chart.

A 26 year old woman claimed that she had a spell cast on her by her sister-in-law. She had experienced tingling sensations in her limbs and a pain in her wrist. The local Shaman had told her that a spell had been cast on her by someone who had picked up the dust of her foot print. This spell had also affected her brother, whom was also being blinded to his wife’s misdeeds. The thing about this case study/story is that it is unusual and in the western model, it would be hard to conventionally place in terms of counseling. It is a story from a people of a different group. So let learn the symbolism. Let’s step into Skiatism. The main character is a woman, so the gender is female. The power here is the dust from the foot-print and this and this was used in a spell, therefore there is a sense of cunning.

One established factor, the truth, is that there is concern for the brother. Regarding the effect, she feels tingles and pain, a general imbalance within her body. The main question here is, are there any stories that can be mirrored on to this one. There are many. I have chosen sleeping beauty to demystify the relationship. In mirroring these images, two charts are drawn up, one opposite the other. As in sleeping beauty, there was a spell cast. The cunning element was the spindle and the truth of the matter was that the King and Queen were very concerned. The main character in the story is also female. The effect is that everybody is sent to sleep for a long period. A general imbalance of the body’s regular cycle. The prince is the “rescue” element in the story. That outside element that sets thing right. When put on the chart, this figure offers also that “crossover” element. That is, something from outside of the area to tragedy comes in and saves it.

On this same model, the counselor provides the grounds for the client to express their truth. So the counselor is the keeper of this. The power element is the therapy and the cunning element is that it provides for a quietening and insight, which brings about a placebo effect of sorts. The gender element is that of the client, which was female and the effect were to find a resolution to their difficulty. An up lifting experience. This then would be placed on the flying part of the chart. Others will read different stories on to this. The main point is that it is brought on to a set of symbols or language that is understood by the recipient, whether that recipient is a counselor, Joe Public or anybody that is going to be in a relationship with this or any other set of groups that are different from one’s own grouping.

The structure provides clarity to a mapping process. Any relationship can be put to this. Draw up the two charts, one opposite the other and map out where each party is in relation to the other. The “crossover” elements would be what one party would be looking for in the other. In terms of the working relationship, this model lets each party use their symbolism without blemishing the other. An item can be viewed by two people, in different ways, without there being a distortion as to what is being viewed. Both parties would understand what has to be worked on in their own way and would work with each other towards a common goal. It is when we do not understand the symbolism and assume that the client has the same reference point of view, that we miss the client.

Just because two people speak the same language, it does not mean that they have the same symbolism/point of reference, within the language being spoken. An example of this would be in a short sentence like, “I feel very hurt and in pain”. Unless we understand what “hurt” and “pain” is to that individual, we cannot really relate to their pain. Saying something along the line of, “Tell me about your pain”, fuels the flames, and, “I understand that it is difficult for you”, doe not acknowledge the persons experience. As I have said before, if you are in a relationship, make sure that you understand the language that is being spoken. Remember that part of “...S/he understand me so well....” and then three months into the relationship comes, “.....S/he doesn’t listen”. With the client it is the same, so make sure that you have the relevant background skills to listen to your client, partner, friend, relatives and children.

Some may need more time than the prescribed hour. Please be there as a person, in person and attentive. That professional gaze does not work in this area and if you are “experimenting”, then leave. The other person will sense this and know. In chapter one I had paused on a point. I would like to go back to that point and pursue it further. Professionals in any field are human beings. That aspect of being professional is not in the look, gaze or being detached. The aspect of being professional is that we understand the job that is on hand and that we carry it out in a human sense with good judgment, acknowledgement of human qualities and the recognition of others that may be different from us. This recognition comes from understanding the other person's symbolism, language and point of reference. It is not assuming that because the person speaks the same language, that they understand what is being said. Watch two people having a heated argument.

Each is so busy trying to get their point through by shouting, that they miss out on what the other person is saying. Watch war situations, or rather what leads to war. The human element is lost and it becomes a struggle to dominate. The same thing applies to therapy. One person may be saying one thing, but because the counselor does not have the tools to engage with them from their background perspective, they pursue the work from an ill equipped bag of their own and try to learn from the client as they go along. Who is teaching who? Or, on whose time is the counselor on. If the client is teaching the counselor how to interact with them, then the client should demand a fee. Counselors are scared to admit their own shortcomings when it comes to understanding culture conscious counseling and so they adopt the format of a “culture free” counseling.

This does more damage than good and it is perpetuated in so many services. I would advise those of you who are going to see a counselor, to ask him/her if they are familiar with your background. Check out where they are coming from and if it suits you then engage. If not then leave, knowing that it is not you that has let the counselor down, but that it is the counselor that has let you down. As counselors we must be responsible for our public. Just as in a relationship, one must take responsibility for the interaction with their partner. In order to do this the individual should have good background knowledge of the person that they are engaging with. There are times when it is difficult to engage. Acknowledge this. Sometimes the silence between two people sitting on common grounds has a way of producing a third element. Something happens.

Just like in *Sleeping Beauty*, after one hundred years of sleep and young prince came along, kissed the woman of his dreams and everyone woke up. What I am saying here is that, sitting silent in times of difficulties and working through a problem in a positive way, will generate a positive solution. The work must be done by both parties in order for any engagement to occur. It takes time. So we work on our relationships with whoever it is that we want that relationship with by preparing and getting to know them. We find out that the person likes chocolate and so we bake them a chocolate cream cake and invite them over and share the gift. We also know that they like flowers, red

carnations, so we get these as well. We get a whole room ready, music included, so that when the person arrives, they know that they are understood and welcomed.

In relationships and especially at the beginning of relationship, partners go out of their way to make preparations to receive the other. A profound connection is made and “S/he understands me so well...” This is in appreciation of what that person is. The question here is; why isn't the same being done in counseling sessions? When a client arrives I would want them to know that I have enough information on their background, so much so that if they were to talk to me about Mahatma or Arjun - Vishad, I would already understand that reference. I would connect immediately on a level that nothing would have to be said in order for us to understand each other. When we go out for a Chinese meal, Italian or Indian meal we know what to order, and therefore do not have to ask the waiter what's on the plate. The same thing should be happening with our clients. They should not be in a position of asking what is on the plate after they have made the “order”.

The counselor should be a chef of sorts, with knowledge of how to blend food and tastes to appeal to the most critical of connoisseurs. Notice how people appreciate good food and always recommend others to eat at particular places. Counselors should aim for the same. Our clients only recommend others to us if we are appreciated by them. Understand a person's story and you begin to understand them. Do not embellish their story with your story. Speak to them in a language that they understand. The client defines the working relationship and the counselor abides by this and not the other way round.

Look at relationships. The one partner will take the lead and will define what they expect. It will then be up to the other to match this or leave. What happens most of the time is that one partner will think that they can match this expectation and then two weeks or six years later they find that actually they have grown apart because they were not able to connect with the other on the level that was initially set up. It can go from “I love you” to “I am divorcing you very quickly”. Clients will do the same thing. They will come to counseling expecting the counselor to meet them on their level. When the counselor doesn't, meet them on this level, the client walks away. The divorce...

I am constantly amused by my colleagues who are baffled by the fact that there are large groups of people who do not use the counseling services made available to them. To you my colleagues, I say think again. Which do-gooder and I mean do-gooder designed this service. Did they consult the local community before they designed this service? What language is spoken? Is there any awareness of what the community needs? Speak to the people my colleagues, speak to the people. Sit down and eat with them. Share a meal. Get to know them as people. Laugh with them and get to know which family is which or who does what. Then ask them what they need help with. Just as I have shared a meal with you, share something of yourself with others and let them get to know you. They may decide that they do or do not like you, but the very fact is that they have sat with you and shared a meal.

When I say, share something of yourself, I mean something of the real you. It's tough because it means breaking down habits and life patterns that has assisted an existence. This inside bit that we keep so well protected, hidden, put away in some far corner, is the very bit that will come back to haunt us. It is a ghost of a distant past that needs to be let out, released, aired out, exorcized. I would be the first to say that I have walked this path. The casualty element is quite extensive. Give of yourself to release yourself. In any relationship, and as I have said, we are all in relationships at any one time, so therefore we need to give of ourselves to release ourselves. A new century is upon us. Let us celebrate this. It has been said that a person who does not know his/her past does not know where they are going. I would like to take this further by saying that if you do not know where you are going then stop.

Look around, take in the sights and breathe. Sometimes we are going so fast that we miss out on the small signals and signs. One of the signs back there said, "Detour", and this is why this particular part of the road leads to know where. There are no people in this place. In order to find people we, as counselors, must go along to where they are and not to where we would like to go. That last sign said detour because in today's world the counselor has to be globally aware. Some drivers were speeding so fast, that they went straight past this sign. Now all I can see is their head lights shining in the darkness devoid of the world that they are in. In time these lights will fade, if they do not turn back and all that will be left is darkness with faint voices wanting to be heard. Those of you who are training as counselors, I do hope that you will ask questions about that first client. It is important. Mind you, the client has the right to ask questions about you and how long you have been counseling. It does happen and I can say that it happened to me.

My first client sensed my apprehension, no..... fright, and asked, "...how long have you been practicing?" My world fell apart right there and then and my throat dried. All I could do was go into that "professional stair" bit as my mind raced through for a "professional answer". Then I said what had to be said that I was relatively new at the practice. This was inevitably followed with, "Well...I hope that I am not your first client". I smiled that "professional smile" again. In all my training no one had told me what to do in these cases. I have learned now, but then, I am not a "new" counselor fresh out of training. So what do you do? What you do not do is that "professional smile" and freeze. What you do is acknowledge that you have recently finished your training and your qualifications are adequate.

Give them the confidence that you know what you are doing by not being afraid. In any job everybody has their first client and the public understands this. It is a point that long practicing "professionals" seem to have "forgotten". Has it been that long? This is a bit about my story and I am sharing it with you. There is no expectation of you, only to become aware and that the next time a counselor or any professional repeats something that is media hyped, think about what and why it is being used in the way that you have heard it.

The story teller has the power of the story and they may tell it in such a way to heighten certain qualities of the story to make it exciting and "alive". This is what the media does and it is alright as long as it is left within the media. When it is brought into the counseling arena, then we as counselors must question why we are not educating our public. More to the point, why are we afraid?

So afraid that we have allowed "reality television" into the reality of the counseling room. Something has tainted our vision. Not that we were ever perfect, but at this point, we too have begun watching the "magic box". Does anybody remember telling a story? When was the last time you told a story as opposed to read one out?

Repeat. Do you read? Do you read?

Are you in trouble? How did you get in trouble?

If you are in trouble, have you sought help? If

You did, did it come? If it did, did you accept it?

Are you out of trouble? What is the character?

Of your consciousness? Are you conscious?

Do you have a self? Do you know who you are?

Do you know what you are doing?

Do you love?

Do you know how to love? Are you loved?

Do you hate? Do you read me? Come back.

Repeat.

Come back.

Come back.

Come back.

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