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Phillip Riner takes us into another dimension of childhood and children's thinking and conceptualizing in his offering of "Inviting Children to Develop Inquiry Skills." His truly innovative suggestions for involving children in the inquiry process are rivaled only by his understanding of elementary-aged children. Who can soon forget his transformation of a soccer field into an African plain as he helped children to explore animal behavior?

Finally, Sterling Gerber and William Purkey team up in a tight, well-constructed presentation on "The Choreography of Counseling." The use of a metaphor in describing the counseling relationship via the art form of the Dance, presents a clear and powerful statement.

You will note the listing of your Editorial Board for the journal, which is presented for a number of reasons. These are the good folks who give of time and talent in helping to bring this journal together, and they deserve our recognition. They are also listed so that you might contact them as well as your Editor, to make suggestions for future issues of the journal, and to submit your own manuscripts for consideration . Guidelines for authors are listed elsewhere in the journal. Finally, those of you who would be interested in serving on the Editorial Board are encouraged to send a letter of intent along with background information to the Editor.

William B. Stafford, Editor

Editorial

Welcome to Volume 4, Number 2 of the Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice. I believe you will find the articles in this issue interesting, thoughtful, and perhaps in some instances, provocative.

Charlotte Reed and Daniel Shaw have collaborated on some verse which they created during the International Conference on Invitational Education in Virginia Beach, Virginia, "Schools Without Fear." Their verse, which evolved throughout the conference, was presented by Charlotte at the closing of the conference, and is presented here as "Voices on Schools Without Fear." Those attending the conference felt that Charlotte and Daniel captured the verve of the conference

Lynette Trent from Macquarie University, NSW, Australia, shares some of her experiences in working with teacher burnout in one of the Sydney, Australia urban schools. Lynette documents the steps she took in the initial pilot project dealing with teacher burnout in her article, "Enhancement of the School Climate by Reducing Teacher Burnout: Using an Invitational Approach" and we would hope that she will share subsequent developments taken in this program.

Karen Owens, the author of the book, Raising Your Child's Inner Self-Esteem (1995), challenges us to examine issues of self-esteem more carefully in her contribution, "Six Myths About Self-Esteem." Dr. Owens makes a distinction between "feel-good self-esteem" and "competency-based self-esteem" which merits our careful attention.

Voices on Schools Without Fear

A collaboration by
Charlotte Reed and Daniel Shaw

I wish I attended a school without fear,
Where gangs, guns, and violence we did not hear;
Where girls could walk unmolested,
And your manhood wasn't daily tested.

An Elementary Principal:

I often dream of a school without fear,
Where so many wouldn't die before the end of the year;
Where such young girls don't get pregnant or have social disease,
Or let these guys do with them whatever they please.

A Secondary Teacher:

I wish I worked in a school without fear,
And we didn't need the police or security here;
Where kids weren't strung-out on crack or other drugs,
Living life too quickly imitating neighborhood thugs.

A Middle School Student:

I, too, dream of a school without fear,
Where lockers hold coats and books instead of guns and beer;
Where students care less about thumpin' and rappin',
And teachers do more than fussin' and nappin'.

A School Counselor:

I'm happy to report mine is a school with less fear,
We hold Invitational Education very dear;
Our places are bright and people care,
Our programs are exciting and our policies fair.

We tried it, we liked it,
Because it reduced the fear;
And we don't have to lament,

"There are no children here."

Presented by Charlotte Reed at the close of International Alliance for Invitational Education Conference, "Schools Without Fear", October 26, 1996, Virginia Beach, VA. Dr. Reed is an Associate Professor of Education at Indiana University Northeast where she is Director of the Urban Teacher Education Program. Dr. Daniel Shaw is Department Chair of Behavioral Medicine, Health Professions Division, at Nova Southeastern University.

Enhancement of the School Climate by Reducing Teacher Burnout: Using an Invitatioanl Approach

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Abstract

Teacher burnout involves the feelings of failure and exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on a person's energy with insufficient reward for the effort. Teacher burnout has serious consequences for the individual, the school and students. For the individual, this can involve physical, psychological and/or behavioural symptoms, loss of motivation, decreased self-esteem and ultimately loss to the teaching profession. This article outlines the objectives and the rationale of a pilot intervention program which was implemented in a school in the Sydney urban area (N.S.W., Australia) to respond to teacher burnout. The purpose of this intervention program was to address the causes of burnout and implement strategies to assist in the reduction and ultimate prevention of burnout using invitational theory as a foundation to create a better school climate.

Enhancement of the School Climate by Reducing Teacher Burnout : An Invitational Approach

According to Purkey and Novak (1988), the implementation of invitational education "... creates schools where people want to be and want to learn" (p.11). Subsequent research findings have shown that teachers in Australia are reporting increased work-related stress which is leading to professional burnout. Teachers are describing schools as places where people do NOT want to be. This leads to feelings of disillusionment, emotional exhaustion, negative attitudes towards children and loss of job satisfaction.

The Australian National Safety Council (1983) has estimated that stress is costing industry and commerce $1.4 billion Australian dollars (approximately equivalent to $1,045,240,000 US dollars) a year in lost working time. It is also directly responsible for loss of personnel at all levels. Surveys have shown that one out of every four teachers eventually leaves the profession (Kremer-Hayon & Kurtz, 1985). A study by McGowan (1984), estimated that approximately 25% of teachers in the Australian state of Queensland were experiencing acute stress and burnout. In Australia, with a total population of 17,896,700 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994), there are 98,527 teachers at the primary level (Kindergarten and Grades 1 - 6 which is equivalent to elementary school in the USA) and 103,388 teachers

at the secondary level (Grades 7 - 12, equivalent to high school in the USA) (Australian Bureau of Statistics,

1993). If McGowan's estimate is extrapolated to the total workforce (that is, 25% of 201,915), it could be predicted that 50,479 teachers in Australia were or are experiencing burnout.

Burnout Defined

Burnout was first defined by Freudenberger (1974) and involves feelings of failure and exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on a person's energy with insufficient reward for the effort. Other researchers have defined burnout as psychological distancing from work (Maslach, 1976; Seidman & Zager, 1987; Cherniss, 1980). Block (1978) and Freudenberger (1983) have identified many of the symptoms associated with burnout, which can be categorised into three groups: physical (e.g., exhaustion, lingering cold, frequent headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, weight loss, sleeplessness and shortness of breath), psychological (e.g., changeable mood, irritability, depression, loss of caring for people, cynical attitude, increased frustration, feelings of helplessness, greater professional risk- taking [i.e., smoking, escapist drinking, drug use]), and behavioural (e.g., deterioration in work performance and absenteeism). It is unlikely that any single isolated symptom can be viewed as an indication of burnout. Various combinations

of the above and perhaps others represent the manifestations of burnout. If these issues are not addressed, eventually, the individual loses desire and motivation, and is unable to fight or flee what is perceived to be an impossible situation. On a more global scale,

burnout can lead to serious consequences in the individual, the school and students. For these reasons, a preventive approach is imperative since damage is likely to have occurred by the time the symptoms are recognised.

Teaching and Burnout

Teaching can be considered a high-stress occupation. The education system has all the elements associated with stress: a bureaucratic structure, continuous evaluation of its processes and outcomes, and increasingly intensive interpersonal interactions with students, parents, colleagues, principals and the community. In addition, increased student misconduct, student apathy, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate salaries, demanding or unsupportive parents, budgetary constraints, expanding administrative loads, lack of infrastructural support, and an increasingly negative public opinion have contributed to an embattled and embittered teacher force in Australia and, no doubt, many other centres in the world.

Burnout tends to be contagious. When dissatisfied and depressed teachers are present in a school, others can very easily become lethargic, cynical and discontented and, before long, the entire organisation becomes a dispirited and uninviting place. According to van der Sijde (1988), the school climate influences both the student and the teacher. He reported a positive relationship between teachers' work conditions and the amount of support they gave to students. In addition, he noted, that

teachers' behaviour depended on their perceptions of how their school functioned. Thus, teachers play an important role in establishing the overall tone of a school. According to Purkey (1970), teachers need to feel successful and good about themselves and their abilities before they can empower their students to feel the same. If, however, teachers are experiencing feelings of failure and/or lacking in personal satisfaction, their relationship with students and the overall school will ultimately suffer.

Australian and international studies have repeatedly shown that the quality of the teachers is the number-one predictor of a school's effectiveness. Therefore, by implication, teachers should be targeted in any intervention program (Jeans, 1992; McGaw, Piper, Banks, & Evans, 1992). To date, most research directed to burnout is descriptive and provides little foundation for further

study or prevention. Strategies that have been employed to help teachers cope with stress, have been of a therapeutic nature; for example, the provision of stress-management seminars and the kindly, if inexpert, advice of some principals and colleagues. This approach could be classed as a band-aid measure, addressing symptoms rather than causes. An alternative and more effective approach is needed to enable causes to be addressed, corrected and ultimately prevented. To break the cycle requires intervention strategies and in-service training that will provide teachers with intrapersonal and interpersonal skills enabling them to cope effectively and achieve personal satisfaction.

Based on previous research, this article outlines the objectives and the rationale of an intervention program which was piloted in a school in the Sydney urban area (N.S.W., Australia) with a teacher-burnout problem. The purpose of this intervention program was to address the causes of burnout and implement strategies to assist in its reduction and ultimate prevention using invitational theory as a foundation.

Pilot Program to Decrease Teacher Burnout

Goals and Enabling Strategies

Invitational education encompasses a constructivist model (Novak, 1990). That is, it implies that education is a cooperative activity in which process is as important as product. It is,

therefore, important to promote a collaborative environment not just in the classroom but among the staff. In addition, intentionally inviting leadership is essential to maintain consistency and a balance in purpose and direction. Kanter (1984) contends that successful leaders need to be skilled at team building, seeking input from others, showing sensitivity to others interests and needs, and possessing a willingness to share rewards and recognition. Another key feature of invitational education is its emphasis on interactions among students, teachers and the school, which is the social context of education. Therefore, based on previous research, the staff involved in the pilot program were advised to strive towards four main goals. Strategies to achieve these goals were also recommended. The goals and enabling strategies reflect the interactive, cooperative emphasis focal to invitational education and are listed below:

<u>Goal 1</u>: <u>Restoring Balance and Perspective Within the Staff</u>

Burnout tends to be contagious and, if it is not prevented early, the entire school may become dispirited and uninviting. In addition, research studies consistently report that burnout occurs more often in high school teachers than primary and infants' teachers (Byrne, 1991; Pierce & Malloy, 1990). The reason for this difference may be attributed to the age of

students; that is, older students are often more eager and able to assert themselves against authority. Therefore, a major goal in preventing burnout is the improvement of staff morale and school climate by the restoration of balance and perspective within the staff.

Enabling Strategies :

Strong leadership was essential to achieve this goal, and strategies directed to enhancing leadership skills were implemented. For example, leaders were advised to support the staff by making them feel worthwhile and important and to give praise and recognition that was deserved. The leaders were encouraged to develop among the staff professional relationships based on mutual trust and respect. It was recommended that leaders should encourage an optimistic outlook and demonstrate intentionality by maintaining consistency in their purpose and direction. Striving towards intentionality was emphasised as this leads to direction and control in one's personal and professional life. Intentionality also helps teachers to develop plans, act on opportunities and evaluate their

actions which is important in the face of major difficulties.

In-service training was also recommended to be held on a regular basis. Issues covered at in-service sessions included research on classroom-management and stress-management

skills. Classroom management was considered to be an essential topic at the high school level for reasons described earlier. In-service training would also assist in the improvement of staff morale and school climate by the restoration of balance and perspective within the staff.

Job enrichment was another requirement to achieve the first goal. This was considered to be very important to teachers and involved recommending that their professional role be enriched by taking trips outside the school, visiting different educational settings, and generally encouraging the opportunity for change and self-development. This would also help enhance teacher morale and school climate and hence the restoration of balance and perspective within the staff.

A sense of humour was also considered essential in achieving this first goal.

<u>Goal 2: Reducing an Individual's Feelings of Isolation</u>

Unfortunately, a recurrent theme in many schools is one of teacher isolation (Hargreaves, 1990) which occurs more often in high schools than primary or infants' schools (Byrne, 1991; Pierce & Malloy, 1990). Isolation contributes to burnout as it precludes possible sources of praise and support. A collaborative school climate should be encouraged to overcome this problem.

Enabling Strategies:

Regular group meetings were recommended, so that teachers could discuss mutual concerns, express emotion, and receive encouragement. These meetings were meant to encourage collaborative communication and reduce feelings of isolation.

Time out was advised during the course of a day to allow opportunities for staff to meet and discuss matters in a relaxed way. Once again this stressed the importance of collaboration and also minimising isolation.

Physical exercise was encouraged, even if this consisted only of a walk at lunch time. It was regarded that a healthy body was more likely to reduce the negative influences of stress.

Goal 3: Increasing Self-Esteem

The enhancement of self-esteem is central to invitational education philosophy. According to Trent, Cooney, Russell, and Warton (1996), children's self-definition is based on their perceived appraisals from significant others (reflected appraisals) as well as how they see themselves (actual opinions). Teachers are considered to be significant others and to have a profound effect on children's developing self by promoting or diminishing their sense of well-being. Studies have shown that a strong positive correlation exists between how teachers view themselves and how they view their students (Purkey & Smith, 1983), that is,

teachers with low self-esteem can hold a correspondingly low

opinion of their students. It follows from this finding that teachers need to view themselves in essentially positive ways for their own well-being as well as to enhance the self-development of their students.

Enabling Strategies:

It was recommended that teachers be encouraged develop a sense of realism about their work and accept the fact that they would not always succeed. Gratification could come from the fact that effort was made whatever the outcome. This way of thinking was to encourage teachers to think more positively about their efforts and consequently more realistically about themselves.

In addition, staff was encouraged to think well of themselves and to develop a sense of personal value and confidence. Strong leadership assists in the achievement of this goal. Teachers should be praised and recognised for their efforts and provided assistance and support in more difficult situations.

Fennick (1992) suggested that instead of working harder,work smarter. In other words, teachers who are likely to overwork and over-stress themselves need to think of strategies to ease their workload. It was suggested that teachers could achieve this by using conferencing, peer-response groups, collaborative grouping,and journal and portfolio writing. Such a

proactive approach could enhance teachers' self-confidence by demonstrating that teachers retain control of their own profession.

Goal 4: Identifying a Strategic Plan of Action

When there is an indication that the staff are starting to work in a collaborative fashion and there is agreement on the directions of the school, it is useful for staff to articulate or identify a strategic plan of action. This process should be a collaborative exercise which involves all members of staff. Plans to continue preventative-burnout strategies should also be incorporated into the action plan.

Enabling Strategies:

It was recommended that staff be engaged in a retreat, even for a few days, from areas of stress and, if possible, into a new geographical setting. This would allow individuals collectively to take stock of his/her situation and plan in a positive and thoughtful manner for the future. This action plan included a list of priorities, preferably short, which were realistic and achievable. Plans to continue preventative-burnout strategies were also incorporated into the action plan. It was necessary for this process to be a collaborative activity, involving the entire school staff.

Strong leadership was essential to achieve this goal as the leader was the catalyst to promote a positive and optimistic way of viewing the future.

Program Evaluation Feedback.

Following the implementation of the pilot program the Principal of the school was interviewed and her opinion on the effect of the intervention program was sought. The Principal had been at the same school, in this leadership position, for 10 years. She was satisfied

there had been an overall improvement in the attitude of the staff and reported that the program had been very successful. The Principal noted that the teachers appeared to be, happier, less stressed and able to communicate with each other more effectively. She also described a reduction of tension amongst the staff which contributed to a more peaceful school climate. The Principal also mentioned that a more trusting environment had developed, where staff were more relaxed, able to discuss mutual concerns more effectively and were more encouraging of each other.

Two specific strategies which were implemented in this program consisted of support groups and more regular and informal staff meetings. Social outlets called support groups were set up. These support groups were designed to delineate specific

areas that were likely to cause stress and frustration, and hence burnout, and discuss ways of sharing out the work more equitably or introduce methods to deal more effectively with their work (e.g., discuss short-cuts other staff members had discovered or suggest possible alternatives).

It was also recommended that staff meetings be held in a more informal fashion. For example, the supply of refreshments at the school's expense, to start meetings by thanking the staff for their contributions, highlighting achievements, and to express formal appreciation and praise for staff efforts. It was also recommended that meetings be held fortnightly instead of monthly. The objective of every second meeting would be to highlight and deal with a problem issue, for example, conflict-

resolution strategies, stress management, problem-solving techniques, classroom-management techniques, and the notion that partnerships must be set up among staff in dealing with more difficult children. The introduction of support groups and more informal, regular staff meetings were considered by the Principal and staff to be very practical, useful and successful, and they recommended that these practices should continue.

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the staff organised three "pupil-free days" and went away on a retreat to a nearby resort. They worked on a mission statement and a strategic plan

of action. They incorporated the suggested preventative-burnout strategies into their action plan. The Principal reported that the staff gained much by this retreat, and that "the staff was able to work collaboratively towards a common goal, seemed to grow closer together by supporting and encouraging each other, and felt at more ease to express emotion and mutual concerns." The Principal and staff recommended that the program should continue in its present form during the subsequent school year.

Suggestions for Future Implementation.

The feedback obtained was considered a satisfactory outcome to develop a more in-depth and definitive study. In the latter, it was considered that the following approach to evaluation be taken :

(a) Future programs would include the assessment of the academic performance of students prior to the implementation of the program and at the conclusion of the program to monitor whether there had been any improvement as a consequence of teacher mediation.

(b) The first and final stage of future programs would include a more in-depth evaluation of the intervention program. Examples of the variables would be : teacher-burnout assessment, teacher satisfaction with the school, teacher satisfaction with the leadership, job- enrichment

opportunities, teachers' level of self-esteem / self-satisfaction / job satisfaction and students' satisfaction with the school.

(c) The program would also consider the implications of the research findings for development of proposals aimed at changes in policies and practices and for their implentation.

<u>Toward the Future</u>.

Burnout is often thought of as an expression of negative adaptation to stress, therefore, the focus tends to be on the detrimental effects of burnout. But burnout can also provide signals to monitor and alter maladaptive systems, both personal and social. This awareness enables us to recognise our stress points and consequently shift our goals, limit our activities, and rethink our lifestyles. From this point of view, burnout provides information that, used effectively in an intervention program, can make positive health-promoting changes in our lives. Once we begin to move in positive directions and address burnout, then we can empower the students to accept our invitations to achieve success. We as educators need to develop balance within ourselves before we can effectively impart this balance with our students. Much of this can be achieved if teachers feel more professionally satisfied as collaborative members of a united school.

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Six Myths About Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Self-esteem has been targeted as being responsible for children's mediocre performances in academic, social, and moral areas. What many have come to believe about self-esteem, however, is known as "feel-good" self-esteem. This view of self-esteem has given us a deceptive, one-sided view of self-esteem and is responsible for perpetrating a number of myths which are discussed and dispelled in this paper. The more dynamic component of self-esteem, inner self-esteem, based on children's actual competencies, has been overlooked for decades. Inner self-esteem is enhanced by helping children develop the necessary skills to succeed in school and act in socially-competent and morally-responsible ways which leads to "competency-based" self-esteem. Competency-based self-esteem is enhanced by meeting challenging standards and expectations and by behaving in socially-valued ways.

Six Myths About Self-Esteem

In a recent international study on math skills, American children ranked last on performance. When asked how they *felt* about their math abilities, they ranked first (LaPointe, Mead, & Askew, 1992). Results such as this have prompted a number of editorials, articles, and books analyzing the reasons for children's lackluster outcomes and inflated self-perceptions not only in academic but also in social and moral areas as well. What has been targeted as the culprit for children's less-than-adequate performance is self-esteem. As one syndicated columnist expressed it, "What would work better for this country is to forget about self-esteem" (Leo, 1996, p.25).

It isn't self-esteem, per se, that is the guilty party, but rather, our mania with helping children feel loved and worthy, which gave birth to and nurtured "feel-good" self-esteem. Focusing only on this source of self-esteem has given us a distorted, often deceptive view of self-esteem, and is responsible for sustaining a number of myths surrounding self-esteem.

Myth One: Feeling Loved And Worthy Is *The* Source Of Self-Esteem

There are two components of self-esteem initially described by prominent sociologists, Cooley (1909) and Mead (1934). The reflective, outer component derives from feeling loved and worthy; the active, inner source is based on children's actual competencies.

Children learn to evaluate themselves by their perceptions of the way others evaluate them, in Cooley’s terms, the looking-glass self. Parents, teachers, and significant others become the social mirrors into which children look for information that comes to define the self. The outer

source of self-esteem is enhanced by adults helping children feel loved and worthy, providing firm but fair rules, and treating them with respect (Coopersmith, l967). For the past several decades, the outer source of self-esteem is the predominant component recognized in definition and measurement and in programs designed to enhance it. The byproduct of this one-sided emphasis is feel-good self-esteem - helping children feel loved

and worthy without any achievement necessary on their part (Lerner, l996).

Feel-Good Self-Esteem

The loved-and-worthy component of self-esteem is the only source now recognized by most parents, educators, and therapists (Lerner, l996). It is the sole focus of the majority of the 350 self-esteem programs designed to enhance it (Beane, l991; Crisci, l986), and which have been less than successful in achieving their desired goal (Phelan, l996). Some self-esteem exercises involve having students sit in a circle and talk about how much they like themselves for fifteen minutes one day a week. Another exercise is called “Fishing for Compliments.” Children, in groups of five or six students, are each given a piece of paper and they put their name on top. The children then exchange the papers and each child writes a compliment for the person whose name appears at the top. At the end of the exercise, children are asked, “How does it feel to receive so many compliments?” Further, self-esteem signs are liberally placed around classrooms to enhance children’s evaluations of self: “Don’t rate yourself on your

behavior; we love you no matter what." "You're wonderful just the way you are."

It is apparent from these activities that feel-good self-esteem advocates emphasize that self-esteem influences behavior and it is something that we (parents and teachers, for example) give to children. Self-esteem, feel-good proponents suggest, is enhanced by praising and protecting children. To this end, we have read, and subsequently came to believe, that children need to be supplied with generous doses of praise, irrespective of whether or not they have done anything to deserve these warm accolades (Sykes,1995). Similarly, it has been advocated that children's self-esteem needs to be protected, and thus, in the academic domain, standards and expectations have been lowered and easy-to-achieve goals have been established (Damon, l995). The feel-good approach is to skip over the hard work of changing children's actions and instead just let children *think* they are smart, nice,

and kind (Zinsmeister, l996).

Competency-Based Self-Esteem

Feel-good self-esteem has been the dominant orthodoxy for so long that few are aware of the second, more dynamic and potent source of self-esteem discussed by Cooley (l909) and Mead (l934) - inner self-esteem. This component was dropped from the self-esteem equation during the Narcissistic Sixties and has been ignored ever since. Inner self-esteem is based on children's actions, skills, and behaviors. It derives from children's

sense of efficacy in mastering their environment and arises in connection with active striving. Focusing on enhancing inner self-esteem leads to competency-based self-esteem. Competency-based self-esteem builds from teaching children the necessary skills that will enable them to earn good grades, get along with others, and act in kind and decent ways towards others.

The competency-based perspective of self-esteem stresses that behavior has a strong influence on self-esteem; it is something that is earned and not instantly given; and is based on children's self-evaluations. Competency-based self-esteem develops from meeting realistically-established, challenging standards, expectations, and goals, and by behaving in socially-valued ways. As a result of ignoring this source of self-esteem, we have large numbers of children who feel good about themselves even though they cannot read, write or spell or act in socially- and morally-responsible ways (Sykes, l995). In short, today's children feel great without necessarily being great.

Myth 2: Self-Esteem Influences Behavior

Children who do well in school, are popular and respectful of others, all appear to have something in common - high self-esteem. Thus, it was presumed by feel-good advocates that if children are encouraged to feel better about themselves that their school work and behavior would improve. Lerner (l996) noted that feel-good self-esteem advocates maintain that “self-esteem is the critical variable for intellectual development - the master key to learning” (p.9).

Children cannot achieve until their self-esteem is raised.

Numerous authorities have stressed the importance of self-esteem and school achievement maintaining that self-esteem influences achievement (Beane & Lipka, l984; Chapman, l988; Harter, l983; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, l988). The majority of these studies, however, are correlational and the relationship between self-esteem and achievement is consistently low. The most universally reported finding is that "the associations between self-esteem and its consequences are mixed, insignificant or absent" (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, l989, p. 15).

The few studies that have tried to establish self-esteem as causally predominant over achievement have usually concluded that self-esteem is mainly an outcome of achievement, not a cause (Calysn, l971; Hoge, Smit, & Crist, l995). Moreover, evidence is mounting that behavior influences self-esteem and that self-esteem is not a precondition for succeeding in academic, social, and moral areas, but a product of it (Bunker, l99l; Cohen & Westhues, l995; Mone, Baker, Douglas, & Jefferies, l995; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, l995).

Myth 3: The Opinion Of Others Is *The* Substance Of Self-Esteem

As a result of only emphasizing Cooley's looking-glass self, many have come to believe that the opinion of others is the sole source of self-esteem. Research tells us, however, that self-esteem is based on *self*-evaluations. Gecas and Schwalbe (1986), for example, have demonstrated that there is little evidence that children's views of themselves are shaped solely by the opinion of others. In fact, data suggest that children rely more on their direct actions and their self-evaluations of those actions in determining how

smart, and socially and morally competent they are (Felson, 1985). As Bandura (1977) commented, people derive much of their knowledge (about themselves) from direct experiences of the effects produced by their own actions.

Similarly, Cooley (l909) suggested, individuals must feel that the final arbitrator is within and not outside of them, and we can help children do that by teaching them appropriate skills. Cooley was not suggesting that children should totally discount the evaluations of others. Children's self-esteem should not be so mercurial, however, that they become chameleons, taking on the drab or bright colors of others' negative and positive responses to them. Competency-based self-esteem is more stable because it has a solid base in the child's demonstrated proficiencies and sure knowledge of past achievements, and thus, someone cannot instantly take it away.

Myth 4: Self-Esteem Is Something That Is Given To Us By Others

During infancy and toddlerhood, children need to be provided with a warm environment that unconditionally provides love and security. During the early years of life, Cooley's and Mead's first source of self-esteem plays a significant role in developing healthy self-esteem in children. As children get older, however, authentic self-esteem derives from children developing competencies in academic, social, physical, and moral areas (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). As children progress through early childhood, the second, inner component of self-esteem takes on greater importance and needs to

be incorporated into children's self-pictures (Hales, 1985). Children need to move from "I am special because I am me" to "I am special because I am competent and capable."

In other words, self-esteem is no longer given to children, but rather, *self-esteem must be earned*. This is not to say that adults no longer play an important role in enhancing children's self-esteem. The emphasis of their efforts, however, needs to incorporate skill building within the context of a warm and nurturing environment. Children who continue to receive generous supplies of approval and recognition, without doing much to earn them, will enjoy an agreeable level of self-esteem, provided they never enter a harsher environment. But, children do enter harsher environments and an inflated sense of self-esteem will not be

supported by others later on.

Myth 5: Giving Generous Supplies of Praise Enhances Children's Self-Esteem

"You're such a good boy. You're such a wonderful little girl." Parents and educators believe that words of praise will foster positive self-esteem in children. Praise is generally ineffective for several reasons. Children will reject praise if the comments made are inconsistent with their self-pictures. Sarah, for example, doesn't feel good about herself academically and believes that her teacher doesn't like her. As a result, she will only "see" those aspects in her environment that fortify this negative evaluation of self. She only notices and dwells upon assignments in which she has done

poorly; she only notices when the teacher doesn't call on her or when she doesn't pick Sarah as a team captain and fails to notice it when her teacher does. Perception is highly subjective and is always consistent with children's self-evaluations (Rogers, 1961).

Like Sarah, children have a strong tendency to defend their self-evaluations and are apt to blot out any positive messages about their own competence if such messages are in conflict with an unfavorable picture of self. For this reason, telling Sarah "You're such a smart girl and you can do much better" will not be effective. Individuals who believe that they are incapable or unattractive will cling to perceptions that bolster this unflattering picture and reject any suggestions that they may be capable or attractive. Furthermore, praise is ineffective because children have not necessarily done anything to earn these compliments; and, most importantly, they have not been taught the behavior and skills that they need in order to feel positive about themselves.

Finally, while younger children tend to behave in ways that will bring them rewards and avoid punishment, with development, children shift away from this orientation and gradually develop inner controls and behave in socially-approved ways because they want to, not necessarily to receive a reward. Therefore, rewards, in the form of praise, may be more

effective in shaping the behavior of young children and not too effective with older children.

Children need to receive encouragement rather than praise. This is

praise: “You did a good job. What a great student you are. You're mommy's little helper.” This is encouragement: “You are reading many words now. You picked up your toys and went to bed on time. You went from a C+ to an A- in English this year.” Praise bestows external values for external qualities. Encouragement acknowledges effort while leaving appraisal to the child. Praise is broad and general “You are a good and worthy person.” Encouragement is specific and focuses on a particular demonstrated behavior, and is always more effective than praise.

Common sense may tell us that teaching children the appropriate skills, rather than praise and self-esteem exercises, is a better way to enhance performance; fortunately research tells us this as well. To illustrate, an exhaustive review of different classroom programs under “Project Follow-Through” tracked 7,000 children at 139 schools across the United States and reported that the educational models focusing on self-esteem resulted in lower academic scores than any other model evaluated. In contrast, the instructional methods that produced the best student performances stressed effective *teaching of academic skills* and made no attempt to enhance self-esteem (except for rewarding good work) (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1992). Skills training has beneficial and lasting effects on children's school performance, peer acceptance, and moral behavior (Calsyn & Kenny, 1983; Mize & Ladd, 1990; Rosenberg, 1989).

Myth 6: Self-Esteem is Strengthened By Giving Children the “Warm Fuzzies” and Avoiding the “Cold Pricklies”

Schools have become obsessed with feel-good self-esteem believing that each child is entitled to success no matter what and that every child needs to win and all deserve rewards. The assumption that teachers must

believed to be just as important as praise in promoting self-esteem. After all, so the myth perpetuates, if positive self-esteem is the essential ingredient for strong academic performance, then anything and everything that could damage children's self-esteem, however slight or transient the injury, is educationally counterproductive and should be eliminated. Grades in some schools have been abolished and replaced with final marks such as “developing” or “becoming.” Parents believe in protecting their children's self-esteem as well and may angrily admonish the teacher for giving their child a “C,” even if it's deserved, because that will bruise their child's self-esteem.

Several educational reforms, such as watered-down curricula, inflated grades, and the end of ability grouping have been adopted in order to make children more equal, and thus, preserve their self-esteem (Sykes, 1995). These policies have not brought the desired results; as standards and expectations are lowered we are witnessing a corresponding drop in children's academic performances (International Comparative Studies in Education, 1995) rendering support that giving children the warm fuzzies and avoiding the cold pricklies not only is ineffective, but also damaging to children as well. Competency-based self-esteem, that is, helping children acquire the skills and proficiencies that will enable them to meet high standards and expectations, is more effective (Baumeister, 1996).

Competency-Based Self-Esteem

Self-esteem research has dispelled many myths about self-esteem; yet, our *modus operandi* has been to follow the dogma of feel-good self-esteem. Healthy self-esteem cannot be supported by approval from parents or sustained by arbitrary praise and acceptance. Children must work for self-worth. There is no gene cluster that propels some children to high and others to low self-esteem. Self-esteem is learned. One of the most important things that adults can do for children is to know what skills they need to learn and how they can constructively teach children these skills (Owens, 1995). All normal children are capable of

learning academic skills that will enable them to perform to the best of their abilities in school; social skills that afford acceptance of and by others; and moral skills that enable them to respect themselves and others.

While space does not permit a detailed explanation of what skills children need to learn and effective ways of teaching children these skills, a brief example for each of the self-esteem domains will, hopefully, illuminate how self-esteem, from a competency-based perspective, is enhanced. Academically, children need to develop an inner locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Children need to learn that they are responsible for their own actions; those who have this attitude are more active in school activities and receive higher grades (Ichikawa, 1986). An effective way of helping children develop an internal attitude of control is through the use of natural consequences. For example, at school, children may not attend soccer practice until their math assignment is complete; at home, clothes left on

the floor will not be washed. Natural consequences show children that the world responds in an orderly fashion to their actions.

Socially, children need to be taught the skills that will enable them to cooperate, share, communicate, listen, deal with conflict, and become less egocentric and more sociocentric. "Coaching" is a successful way to help children acquire these skills (Mize & Ladd, 1990). In helping children develop ways of behaving that will promote peer acceptance, parents and educators act as coaches. They target a particular social skill, such as communicating with others, and teach the child important aspects of communicating, beginning, perhaps, with what to say when entering a group. Coaches assist children by telling them why this skill is important, provide them with suggestions on how to behave, try out role-playing sessions, and assess the situation afterward.

Becoming a good and decent person involves children developing sensitivity and concern for others: in other words, having a sense of empathy. Adults' validating children's own

feelings helps them learn empathy. Teaching empathy is also a matter of reinforcing a certain perspective on good deeds. If, to illustrate, the child does something nice for a friend, instead of commenting, "What a good little boy you are for sharing your toy," ask the child to connect his sharing the toy with how good he has made the other child feel.

Fostering competency-based self-esteem does not mean that every child must be the straight-A, Ivy-League bound, homecoming king or queen

who receives the Good Samaritan award every year. Similarly, children do not have to be brilliant or exceptionally talented. It does mean that children master competent ways of behaving, strive to be the best they can be, and take pride in their accomplishments, and parents, teachers, and concerned adults can't ask for anything more than that.

Self-esteem was once the *sine qua non* for helping our children become productive and successful. Now the pendulum has swung to the other side with disgruntled adults calling for its demise. This again reflects our myopic view of recognizing only feel-good self-esteem and is reminiscent of throwing the baby out with the bath water. What would work best for our country is to forget about feel-good self-esteem. Children will eventually find out that it has all been a fraud because healthy self-esteem cannot be supported or sustained by praising and protecting them. Stable self-esteem develops through helping children be, and subsequently feel capable, not the other way around. Thus, we need to accentuate mastery-oriented, performance-related, competency-based self-esteem and emphasize self-esteem as a byproduct of *real* achievement. Authentic self-esteem must be accompanied by accomplishments and personal qualities or it is counterfeit and meaningless.

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Inviting Children

to Develop Inquiry Skills

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Abstract

This article describes by vignette and analysis four primary instructional tasks necessary to develop inquiry skills in children. These tasks are shown to be fundamental to the inviting classroom and to experimental science.

Inviting Children to Develop Inquiry Skills

"If teaching were telling we'd all be so smart we couldn't stand it!" Unfortunately, children too often are left on the outside of educational experiences because they are *told* what to learn rather than being *invited* to a learning opportunity. There are few among us who do not incur a natural resistance to being ordered about with a "Do this because I say so!" command no matter how cordially delivered. But, when approached with an invitational attitude toward learning the message changes to a "Would you join me so that we can do this?" and individuals are faced with a series of inclusive choices rather than being confronted by external demands.

Having choices diminishes defensiveness and resistance while increasing social and personal responsibilities. Within the teacher's typical day, there are thousands of opportunities to turn "telling" into "invitations." Teachers who invite children to learning provide them with choices that assist them in developing self-control and personal responsibility. Teachers are confronted with a wide variety of strategies that can turn daily situations into invitations for children to explore, examine, and analyze the world around them. Unfortunately, the classroom is a very complex place and these opportunities often are lost, not due to a lack of teacher skill, but simply to a lack of teacher awareness. The purpose of this article is to provide opportunities for teachers to become more aware of the classroom's inviting moments, partially by being told about them, but also by being

invited to analyze two short vignettes of teachers expanding the inquiry skills of children using an inviting stance. The article is open-ended and the reader is encouraged to interact and analyze the vignettes with the four instructional tasks provided in the conclusion..

Inquiry into School Life: A Vignette

The teacher had shared with a class of young gifted children the development of a research project that was part of a university course the teacher was taking. The children were fascinated and asked their teacher if they could do their own research project. The teacher entertained the idea and concluded the children were quite capable of dealing with intellectual problems as well as the rudimentary statistical tools used in survey research. The math involved was certainly within their abilities. The logic involved in a rational approach unquestionably was demonstrated by these children. The teacher and students agreed to develop and conduct a survey about a question that both teachers and students might find to be meaningful and useful.

After some discussion the teacher suggested that the students systematically approach the issue of learning satisfaction among the students in the school. The culminating report could be a presentation to the teachers in a future staff meeting. The children were quite excited about the prospect of “teaching the teachers” and the project was set in motion.

The children determined that the survey's lead question would be "What is your favorite subject in school?" followed by "Why?" By random sampling (using a table of random numbers and the Rolodex) the students selected 150 of the school's 600 students. Each was interviewed and the results tallied. The findings astounded the children's teachers. The children were quite excited about their presentation to the faculty. With charts on overhead transparencies they proceeded to talk about learning satisfaction. When the staff was informed, the results were a source of great consternation. The favorite subject by far was spelling. The children typically provided the same answer as to why: "I know what to do to get a good grade." The least favorite was science. The children were surprised by the teachers' reaction of concern.

The teachers asked the child researchers to do a follow up interview to find out in more detail why science was so unloved and to explore more thoroughly how the students felt about learning in the school. The children, knowing more than the teachers on the issue of learner satisfaction, hypothesized that science was not liked because it was "hard". After some probing, it was found that hard was a proxy for "I don't do well." A list of other possible reasons was created, the random sample of children interviewed, and again the results were tallied. The children's hypothesis was confirmed: children didn't like science because they weren't sure how to do well. Spelling was liked because it was easy (i.e., children succeeded). Spelling required them to memorize twenty words and write them on Friday. Every child knew precisely what to do to get an A if they wanted one. The principal's examination of report

cards verified the

findings. Spelling was the top subject for As with science trailing at the end.

An Invitation to Failure Is No Invitation

This piece of student research illustrates two things. First, it illustrates how children, although they initiated the invitation, received an invitation in return in order to explore the school community. The children were not only invited to learn but also to teach the teachers. Second, the children's research illustrates how a subject most inclined to attract children can be destroyed by a lack of invitations to success. Worms, butterflies, electricity, rockets, rocks, and chemical "booms" are all a part of science, but somehow, the school had taken the wonder of nature and reduced it to confusion and failure. This was particularly sad in light of the fact that the teachers in this school were exemplars in compassion and caring.

Even more disturbing, the children told the teachers quite simply that spelling, because if afforded them success, was their favorite *even though* it involved little intellectual skill other than memory and required virtually no curiosity. Spelling doesn't allow much room for exploration, invention, experimentation: How could it be their favorite?

Inviting Students to Grow

William Purkey (1990), in a speech to the Association of Teacher Educators, lamented the oft used saying "What's worth doing is worth doing well." Instead, he claims that what's worth doing is worth doing poorly, at least at first. He noted that almost every skill that we do well

today was preceded by efforts that were unskillful, bungling, and inept. Effective teaching research consistently shows, however, that effective teachers will alter the presentation of new information and new skills in order for children to retain moderate to high success rates (Borich, 1992). To wit, effective teachers keep the bungling to a minimum and keep the necessary early mistakes focused on achieving future successes. Invitational education meshes nicely into this aspect of effective teaching research in that it argues for a gentler, more open attitude about learning and the challenges faced by students as they learn. The inviting attitude emphasizes intentional encouragement and support during early learning which then leads to the precision that comes only with repetitive experimentation and practice. Experimental science and invitational education share this common perspective. Whitehead (1957) describes this perspective as the rhythm of learning. The natural flow from ignorance to knowledge starts with confused interest, leading to participation, which then leads to continued exploration, which leads to knowledge. There can be little doubt that this is the very attitude that is the foundation of both invitational education and modern experimental science. Everything from rocket development to heart transplants is littered with misconceptions and false starts. This is at the heart of understanding the inviting posture of effective teachers. Inviting children to learn is exemplified by the undefined road to science knowledge that the children in our first vignette had learned to fear most. While children may be taught explicitly that failure is always the precursor of success in scientific and other endeavors, the lesson often lacks credibility in light of teaching

practices that discourage children who fail.

Inviting in Increments: An Analogy

Even though baseball requires a level of finesse not available until the later teen years, that does not preclude teaching the game to our children, sometimes at incredibly early ages. One version even requires that the ball, rather than being pitched to the batter, is perched on an enlarged version of a golf tee so that the eye-hand coordination lacking in six year olds will not prevent participation in the game. This does not mean that youngsters do not enjoy and profit from the game played even on rudimentary levels. That the game is adapted to their abilities only *increases* their success and enthusiasm for the game. During practice the coaches concentrate on one skill at a time and periodically all the skills are combined to play the game. With this strategy America regularly turns out not only stellar baseball players, but also athletes in all sports.

As in baseball, we can teach the skills of inquiry one at a time *and* play the game. A combination of strategies invites some successes to counteract the disappointment of the inevitable and unavoidable failures that occur along the way. For the coach, talking about baseball is very inefficient in teaching catching, throwing, and batting. Likewise, talking about inquiry is not very effective. Inquiry requires practice. Doing inquiry is learning inquiry. As with baseball, inquiry is best achieved by practice, practice, practice....

Establishing Reasonable Expectations

Traditional school approaches to inquiry rarely lead children to an understanding of the necessary perseverance of trial and error or the joy of discovery. For too many children, inquiry is a process of locating answers to problems by "looking them up in a book." Since inquiry is often stereotyped as difficult, esoteric, and demanding, students view subjects (such as science) that typify inquiry as being limited to a brilliant few. This is a sad consequence of the fact that as a society we have very little understanding of how knowledge is developed and assessed. When teachers invite students into a curriculum of inquiry, certain expectations must be discussed in advance. The first expectation to be developed is that learning requires effort (and a lot of it.) Replacing the hedonistic notion that “learning should be fun” with the inviting view that “learning is satisfying and empowering,” children are led to the conclusion that learning is not an amusement, but the only way to build a “more powerful you.” The second expectation that needs to be established is that being smart is great but being smart and kind is greater. Learning should be valued but there are values more important to the classroom. Being a responsible capable person requires respect and compassion for others.

Inquiry into Animal Behavior: Another Vignette

The struggling teacher was an American teaching in a British Infant School and could not get the English children to understand hunting strategies of predatory animals. In the teacher’s home town, the children were well versed in things of the wild and the TV was saturated with nature

programming. But in this small English village it was different. The children could not believe the teacher when told that lions were usually unsuccessful in their hunting trips. Surely, they thought, an animal as large and powerful as a lion just runs into a crowd of antelope and bites the first one it comes to. The teacher wanted to teach to them about the best theories of animal behavior but feared that lecture might be both too abstract and too unbelievable. The teacher decided to invite the children to engage the problem directly and apply their newly acquired knowledge. A new plan was laid and the teacher invited the children to visit an African plain and watch the animals.

Lacking an African plain, the football pitch [aka the soccer field], both open and spacious, seemed the closest thing to the hunting environment of the lion. Twenty-one children were designated as antelope and sent out to graze on grass wherever they chose. The five strongest and huskiest children became lions and were sentenced to hungry bellies and cross tempers. At the whistle, the lions could feed on the helpless antelope grazing peacefully on the pitch. In a mindless dash the lions attacked. But the strong husky lions weren't as fast as the frisky antelope. After five minutes of gnashing of teeth, near misses, and taunting gestures by the antelope, not one of the hapless hunted creatures had been bitten.

The lions lamented and the teacher invited the lions to a strategy session. The “mindless-dash” theory was analyzed: that it didn’t work was the first item of discussion. The children concluded that the antelope were too fast, the chase was too tiring, and the antelopes had too big a head start. The lions were indecisive but posed some important questions:

“How can we slow down the antelope? How can lions get rest? How can lions get rid of the confusion? Which antelope should be caught first? How can the head start be cut short?” A plan was laid. The lions spread out as they approached the antelope. Zoe, the frailest of the antelope was singled out by the first lion. The chase ensued; the other lions ignored the remaining antelopes who, for a lack of being chased, stood still and watched. As Zoe passed the second lion, the first lion broke off and the second took up the chase. The chase was passed three times before Zoe raised her hands in exhaustion and was bitten by the hungry predator. The four other lions paraded around the carcass, celebrating their victory. The lions soon figured out they could capture even the strongest of the antelope--it just took longer.

The antelope realized their danger but within the pitch could not find any protection from the deadly strategy of the lions. The antelope were unhappy with their teacher whom they felt had unfairly sided with the lions. "Not fair!" they cried. "You helped! Anyway, animals don't think." The teacher invited them to reconsider, “Are you saying animals are mindless? That they don’t have any ideas about how to survive?”

The antelope gathered and began to talk. The antelope decided not to go anywhere near a lion and if one is chasing you run away from the other lions as well. The tide turned and the lions are once again hungry. The lions counterattack. "Let's hunt in packs...surround the antelope, wear them down while trying to trap them...." The antelopes countered again...."run for wide open spaces as straight as possible...dodge only when

a lion gets close. Speed and openness means survival." Though the children had not learned how lions hunt (lions don't exactly hunt this way although some jackals and hyenas do), they had learned planning was the most direct route to success and that there are many bumps along the way.

How Inviting Inquiry Lessons Are Created

When teachers provide inviting inquiry lessons they must perform several instructional tasks. They must plan appropriately by having strategies that :

- *establish risk recognition and provide support*
- *mobilize meaning and interest*
- *flex time scheduling and use*
- *provide a tentative attitude toward knowledge*

When teachers *establish risk recognition* they help students increase their awareness that inquiring into the unknown is an adventure where the road may be unclear and the direction can be unexpected. Since inquiry requires exploring the unknown, certain risks are always present. First, the problem under study may result in better understanding but the problem remains unsolved. Even with the best efforts of the children, an answer might not be found. Second, inquiry may mean that children acting as investigators may derive differing answers that seem equally plausible. This requires even more cooperation from the children. And finally, children must understand all contributions must be given consideration. The inviting inquiry curriculum is rooted in a teacher attitude where discovery and

experimentation is not only valued but the risks are understood. Those risks, though, are accompanied by a psychological safety net initiated by the teacher and supported by the students.

When teachers *mobilize for meaning and interest,* special attention must be paid to the unique characteristics of the learners. While guidelines for an inviting curriculum can be formulated, the curriculum can never be packaged because an inviting stance can only exist where teachers and students endeavor together to promote curiosity, questioning and learning in a mutually respectful and supportive environment. Therefore, an inviting inquiry curriculum is an elusive and ephemeral destination which requires continual renewal. Successfully inviting inquiry depends on a teacher who manages the active engagement of children's energies on significant and meaningful situations from their lives. Inquiry needs to be relevant and appealing to their emerging interests.

Teachers need to be prepared to *flex time schedules* to capitalized on these emerging interests of children. An inviting inquiry curriculum requires a teacher who actively searches for the opportunities afforded by the intersection of student interest and planned curriculum. The teacher needs to be sensitive to the use of a broad range of experiences both through careful planning and being ready to exploit happenstance. Teachers must also set aside time for students to work through unexpected problems and to provide sufficient time so that long term inquiry problems can be studied. While breakthrough achievements almost always have an element of serendipity, it is a fortuity born of perseverance and purposefulness. Even when children's attention is carefully

focused on a phenomenon or object

with an invitation to explore, interest may wane if quick solutions are not found. The teacher needs to assist students in understanding the need for precision that only comes through repeated study.

Teachers must accept and help students develop a *tentative attitude toward knowledge* so that students understand that knowledge is created in developmental steps. In an attempt to involve children more introspectively with their environment (Riner, 1983) isolated six preliminary skills inherent in inquiry methodology that also fit the developmental patterns of 8-12 year olds. Children can be encouraged to practice observation, problem finding/question asking, seeing relationships, note taking, sustaining interest/perseverance, and hypothesizing. Observation requires looking carefully and studying the detail of appearance and relationships. Problem finding and question asking requires that children actively pursue knowledge rather than taking on the role of passenger in the knowledge train of others. Note taking requires children to record their thoughts and ideas for later use and analysis. Sustaining interest and perseverance suggests to the students that problems are not readily solved and takes careful thought and study over long periods of time to resolve. Seeing relationships asks children to look for the interaction among entities and begin hypothesizing about both how and why events occur as they do. All six skills are virtual manifestations of invitations to look, ask, seek, and find.

Summary

This article attempted to illustrate the invitational nature of inquiry instruction and the rich benefits that can be derived from inviting lessons.

Inviting inquiry requires a tolerance of error, supportive environments that nurture inquiring intellects, and participation that involves meaningful endeavors that expand the child's understanding of the world. Inviting opportunities are found in the daily curiosity of children. Teachers need to be aware of the subtlety of the moment to invite children into inquiry and must be prepared with basic strategies, such as invitations, to observe, record, hypothesize, and interact. With an environment that recognizes risk and provides support, teachers can establish inquiring attitudes in children that mobilize children's quests for understanding and meaning.

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Six Myths About Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Self-esteem has been targeted as being responsible for children's mediocre performances in academic, social, and moral areas. What many have come to believe about self-esteem, however, is known as "feel-good" self-esteem. This view of self-esteem has given us a deceptive, one-sided view of self-esteem and is responsible for perpetrating a number of myths which are discussed and dispelled in this paper. The more dynamic component of self-esteem, inner self-esteem, based on children's actual competencies, has been overlooked for decades. Inner self-esteem is enhanced by helping children develop the necessary skills to succeed in school and act in socially-competent and morally-responsible ways which leads to "competency-based" self-esteem. Competency-based self-esteem is enhanced by meeting challenging standards and expectations and by behaving in socially-valued ways.

Six Myths About Self-Esteem

In a recent international study on math skills, American children ranked last on performance. When asked how they *felt* about their math abilities, they ranked first (LaPointe, Mead, & Askew, 1992). Results such as this have prompted a number of editorials, articles, and books analyzing the reasons for children's lackluster outcomes and inflated self-perceptions not only in academic but also in social and moral areas as well. What has been targeted as the culprit for children's less-than-adequate performance is self-esteem. As one syndicated columnist expressed it, "What would work better for this country is to forget about self-esteem" (Leo, 1996, p.25).

It isn't self-esteem, per se, that is the guilty party, but rather, our mania with helping children feel loved and worthy, which gave birth to and nurtured "feel-good" self-esteem. Focusing only on this source of self-esteem has given us a distorted, often deceptive view of self-esteem, and is responsible for sustaining a number of myths surrounding self-esteem.

Myth One: Feeling Loved And Worthy Is *The* Source Of Self-Esteem

There are two components of self-esteem initially described by prominent sociologists, Cooley (1909) and Mead (1934). The reflective, outer component derives from feeling loved and worthy; the active, inner source is based on children's actual competencies.

Children learn to evaluate themselves by their perceptions of the way others evaluate them, in Cooley’s terms, the looking-glass self. Parents, teachers, and significant others become the social mirrors into which children look for information that comes to define the self. The outer

source of self-esteem is enhanced by adults helping children feel loved and worthy, providing firm but fair rules, and treating them with respect (Coopersmith, l967). For the past several decades, the outer source of self-esteem is the predominant component recognized in definition and measurement and in programs designed to enhance it. The byproduct of this one-sided emphasis is feel-good self-esteem - helping children feel loved

and worthy without any achievement necessary on their part (Lerner, l996).

Feel-Good Self-Esteem

The loved-and-worthy component of self-esteem is the only source now recognized by most parents, educators, and therapists (Lerner, l996). It is the sole focus of the majority of the 350 self-esteem programs designed to enhance it (Beane, l991; Crisci, l986), and which have been less than successful in achieving their desired goal (Phelan, l996). Some self-esteem exercises involve having students sit in a circle and talk about how much they like themselves for fifteen minutes one day a week. Another exercise is called “Fishing for Compliments.” Children, in groups of five or six students, are each given a piece of paper and they put their name on top. The children then exchange the papers and each child writes a compliment for the person whose name appears at the top. At the end of the exercise, children are asked, “How does it feel to receive so many compliments?” Further, self-esteem signs are liberally placed around classrooms to enhance children’s evaluations of self: “Don’t rate yourself on your

behavior; we love you no matter what." "You're wonderful just the way you are."

It is apparent from these activities that feel-good self-esteem advocates emphasize that self-esteem influences behavior and it is something that we (parents and teachers, for example) give to children. Self-esteem, feel-good proponents suggest, is enhanced by praising and protecting children. To this end, we have read, and subsequently came to believe, that children need to be supplied with generous doses of praise, irrespective of whether or not they have done anything to deserve these warm accolades (Sykes,1995). Similarly, it has been advocated that children's self-esteem needs to be protected, and thus, in the academic domain, standards and expectations have been lowered and easy-to-achieve goals have been established (Damon, l995). The feel-good approach is to skip over the hard work of changing children's actions and instead just let children *think* they are smart, nice,

and kind (Zinsmeister, l996).

Competency-Based Self-Esteem

Feel-good self-esteem has been the dominant orthodoxy for so long that few are aware of the second, more dynamic and potent source of self-esteem discussed by Cooley (l909) and Mead (l934) - inner self-esteem. This component was dropped from the self-esteem equation during the Narcissistic Sixties and has been ignored ever since. Inner self-esteem is based on children's actions, skills, and behaviors. It derives from children's

sense of efficacy in mastering their environment and arises in connection with active striving. Focusing on enhancing inner self-esteem leads to competency-based self-esteem. Competency-based self-esteem builds from teaching children the necessary skills that will enable them to earn good grades, get along with others, and act in kind and decent ways towards others.

The competency-based perspective of self-esteem stresses that behavior has a strong influence on self-esteem; it is something that is earned and not instantly given; and is based on children's self-evaluations. Competency-based self-esteem develops from meeting realistically-established, challenging standards, expectations, and goals, and by behaving in socially-valued ways. As a result of ignoring this source of self-esteem, we have large numbers of children who feel good about themselves even though they cannot read, write or spell or act in socially- and morally-responsible ways (Sykes, l995). In short, today's children feel great without necessarily being great.

Myth 2: Self-Esteem Influences Behavior

Children who do well in school, are popular and respectful of others, all appear to have something in common - high self-esteem. Thus, it was presumed by feel-good advocates that if children are encouraged to feel better about themselves that their school work and behavior would improve. Lerner (l996) noted that feel-good self-esteem advocates maintain that “self-esteem is the critical variable for intellectual development - the master key to learning” (p.9).

Children cannot achieve until their self-esteem is raised.

Numerous authorities have stressed the importance of self-esteem and school achievement maintaining that self-esteem influences achievement (Beane & Lipka, l984; Chapman, l988; Harter, l983; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, l988). The majority of these studies, however, are correlational and the relationship between self-esteem and achievement is consistently low. The most universally reported finding is that "the associations between self-esteem and its consequences are mixed, insignificant or absent" (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, l989, p. 15).

The few studies that have tried to establish self-esteem as causally predominant over achievement have usually concluded that self-esteem is mainly an outcome of achievement, not a cause (Calysn, l971; Hoge, Smit, & Crist, l995). Moreover, evidence is mounting that behavior influences self-esteem and that self-esteem is not a precondition for succeeding in academic, social, and moral areas, but a product of it (Bunker, l99l; Cohen & Westhues, l995; Mone, Baker, Douglas, & Jefferies, l995; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, l995).

Myth 3: The Opinion Of Others Is *The* Substance Of Self-Esteem

As a result of only emphasizing Cooley's looking-glass self, many have come to believe that the opinion of others is the sole source of self-esteem. Research tells us, however, that self-esteem is based on *self*-evaluations. Gecas and Schwalbe (1986), for example, have demonstrated that there is little evidence that children's views of themselves are shaped solely by the opinion of others. In fact, data suggest that children rely more on their direct actions and their self-evaluations of those actions in determining how

smart, and socially and morally competent they are (Felson, 1985). As Bandura (1977) commented, people derive much of their knowledge (about themselves) from direct experiences of the effects produced by their own actions.

Similarly, Cooley (l909) suggested, individuals must feel that the final arbitrator is within and not outside of them, and we can help children do that by teaching them appropriate skills. Cooley was not suggesting that children should totally discount the evaluations of others. Children's self-esteem should not be so mercurial, however, that they become chameleons, taking on the drab or bright colors of others' negative and positive responses to them. Competency-based self-esteem is more stable because it has a solid base in the child's demonstrated proficiencies and sure knowledge of past achievements, and thus, someone cannot instantly take it away.

Myth 4: Self-Esteem Is Something That Is Given To Us By Others

During infancy and toddlerhood, children need to be provided with a warm environment that unconditionally provides love and security. During the early years of life, Cooley's and Mead's first source of self-esteem plays a significant role in developing healthy self-esteem in children. As children get older, however, authentic self-esteem derives from children developing competencies in academic, social, physical, and moral areas (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). As children progress through early childhood, the second, inner component of self-esteem takes on greater importance and needs to

be incorporated into children's self-pictures (Hales, 1985). Children need to move from "I am special because I am me" to "I am special because I am competent and capable."

In other words, self-esteem is no longer given to children, but rather, *self-esteem must be earned*. This is not to say that adults no longer play an important role in enhancing children's self-esteem. The emphasis of their efforts, however, needs to incorporate skill building within the context of a warm and nurturing environment. Children who continue to receive generous supplies of approval and recognition, without doing much to earn them, will enjoy an agreeable level of self-esteem, provided they never enter a harsher environment. But, children do enter harsher environments and an inflated sense of self-esteem will not be

supported by others later on.

Myth 5: Giving Generous Supplies of Praise Enhances Children's Self-Esteem

"You're such a good boy. You're such a wonderful little girl." Parents and educators believe that words of praise will foster positive self-esteem in children. Praise is generally ineffective for several reasons. Children will reject praise if the comments made are inconsistent with their self-pictures. Sarah, for example, doesn't feel good about herself academically and believes that her teacher doesn't like her. As a result, she will only "see" those aspects in her environment that fortify this negative evaluation of self. She only notices and dwells upon assignments in which she has done

poorly; she only notices when the teacher doesn't call on her or when she doesn't pick Sarah as a team captain and fails to notice it when her teacher does. Perception is highly subjective and is always consistent with children's self-evaluations (Rogers, 1961).

Like Sarah, children have a strong tendency to defend their self-evaluations and are apt to blot out any positive messages about their own competence if such messages are in conflict with an unfavorable picture of self. For this reason, telling Sarah "You're such a smart girl and you can do much better" will not be effective. Individuals who believe that they are incapable or unattractive will cling to perceptions that bolster this unflattering picture and reject any suggestions that they may be capable or attractive. Furthermore, praise is ineffective because children have not necessarily done anything to earn these compliments; and, most importantly, they have not been taught the behavior and skills that they need in order to feel positive about themselves.

Finally, while younger children tend to behave in ways that will bring them rewards and avoid punishment, with development, children shift away from this orientation and gradually develop inner controls and behave in socially-approved ways because they want to, not necessarily to receive a reward. Therefore, rewards, in the form of praise, may be more

effective in shaping the behavior of young children and not too effective with older children.

Children need to receive encouragement rather than praise. This is

praise: “You did a good job. What a great student you are. You're mommy's little helper.” This is encouragement: “You are reading many words now. You picked up your toys and went to bed on time. You went from a C+ to an A- in English this year.” Praise bestows external values for external qualities. Encouragement acknowledges effort while leaving appraisal to the child. Praise is broad and general “You are a good and worthy person.” Encouragement is specific and focuses on a particular demonstrated behavior, and is always more effective than praise.

Common sense may tell us that teaching children the appropriate skills, rather than praise and self-esteem exercises, is a better way to enhance performance; fortunately research tells us this as well. To illustrate, an exhaustive review of different classroom programs under “Project Follow-Through” tracked 7,000 children at 139 schools across the United States and reported that the educational models focusing on self-esteem resulted in lower academic scores than any other model evaluated. In contrast, the instructional methods that produced the best student performances stressed effective *teaching of academic skills* and made no attempt to enhance self-esteem (except for rewarding good work) (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1992). Skills training has beneficial and lasting effects on children's school performance, peer acceptance, and moral behavior (Calsyn & Kenny, 1983; Mize & Ladd, 1990; Rosenberg, 1989).

Myth 6: Self-Esteem is Strengthened By Giving Children the “Warm Fuzzies” and Avoiding the “Cold Pricklies”

Schools have become obsessed with feel-good self-esteem believing that each child is entitled to success no matter what and that every child needs to win and all deserve rewards. The assumption that teachers must

believed to be just as important as praise in promoting self-esteem. After all, so the myth perpetuates, if positive self-esteem is the essential ingredient for strong academic performance, then anything and everything that could damage children's self-esteem, however slight or transient the injury, is educationally counterproductive and should be eliminated. Grades in some schools have been abolished and replaced with final marks such as “developing” or “becoming.” Parents believe in protecting their children's self-esteem as well and may angrily admonish the teacher for giving their child a “C,” even if it's deserved, because that will bruise their child's self-esteem.

Several educational reforms, such as watered-down curricula, inflated grades, and the end of ability grouping have been adopted in order to make children more equal, and thus, preserve their self-esteem (Sykes, 1995). These policies have not brought the desired results; as standards and expectations are lowered we are witnessing a corresponding drop in children's academic performances (International Comparative Studies in Education, 1995) rendering support that giving children the warm fuzzies and avoiding the cold pricklies not only is ineffective, but also damaging to children as well. Competency-based self-esteem, that is, helping children acquire the skills and proficiencies that will enable them to meet high standards and expectations, is more effective (Baumeister, 1996).

Competency-Based Self-Esteem

Self-esteem research has dispelled many myths about self-esteem; yet, our *modus operandi* has been to follow the dogma of feel-good self-esteem. Healthy self-esteem cannot be supported by approval from parents or sustained by arbitrary praise and acceptance. Children must work for self-worth. There is no gene cluster that propels some children to high and others to low self-esteem. Self-esteem is learned. One of the most important things that adults can do for children is to know what skills they need to learn and how they can constructively teach children these skills (Owens, 1995). All normal children are capable of

learning academic skills that will enable them to perform to the best of their abilities in school; social skills that afford acceptance of and by others; and moral skills that enable them to respect themselves and others.

While space does not permit a detailed explanation of what skills children need to learn and effective ways of teaching children these skills, a brief example for each of the self-esteem domains will, hopefully, illuminate how self-esteem, from a competency-based perspective, is enhanced. Academically, children need to develop an inner locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Children need to learn that they are responsible for their own actions; those who have this attitude are more active in school activities and receive higher grades (Ichikawa, 1986). An effective way of helping children develop an internal attitude of control is through the use of natural consequences. For example, at school, children may not attend soccer practice until their math assignment is complete; at home, clothes left on

the floor will not be washed. Natural consequences show children that the world responds in an orderly fashion to their actions.

Socially, children need to be taught the skills that will enable them to cooperate, share, communicate, listen, deal with conflict, and become less egocentric and more sociocentric. "Coaching" is a successful way to help children acquire these skills (Mize & Ladd, 1990). In helping children develop ways of behaving that will promote peer acceptance, parents and educators act as coaches. They target a particular social skill, such as communicating with others, and teach the child important aspects of communicating, beginning, perhaps, with what to say when entering a group. Coaches assist children by telling them why this skill is important, provide them with suggestions on how to behave, try out role-playing sessions, and assess the situation afterward.

Becoming a good and decent person involves children developing sensitivity and concern for others: in other words, having a sense of empathy. Adults' validating children's own

feelings helps them learn empathy. Teaching empathy is also a matter of reinforcing a certain perspective on good deeds. If, to illustrate, the child does something nice for a friend, instead of commenting, "What a good little boy you are for sharing your toy," ask the child to connect his sharing the toy with how good he has made the other child feel.

Fostering competency-based self-esteem does not mean that every child must be the straight-A, Ivy-League bound, homecoming king or queen

who receives the Good Samaritan award every year. Similarly, children do not have to be brilliant or exceptionally talented. It does mean that children master competent ways of behaving, strive to be the best they can be, and take pride in their accomplishments, and parents, teachers, and concerned adults can't ask for anything more than that.

Self-esteem was once the *sine qua non* for helping our children become productive and successful. Now the pendulum has swung to the other side with disgruntled adults calling for its demise. This again reflects our myopic view of recognizing only feel-good self-esteem and is reminiscent of throwing the baby out with the bath water. What would work best for our country is to forget about feel-good self-esteem. Children will eventually find out that it has all been a fraud because healthy self-esteem cannot be supported or sustained by praising and protecting them. Stable self-esteem develops through helping children be, and subsequently feel capable, not the other way around. Thus, we need to accentuate mastery-oriented, performance-related, competency-based self-esteem and emphasize self-esteem as a byproduct of *real* achievement. Authentic self-esteem must be accompanied by accomplishments and personal qualities or it is counterfeit and meaningless.

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The Choreography of Counseling

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True ease in counseling comes from art, not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance.

Alexander Pope (paraphrased)

Abstract

From a combination of principles of Invitational Counseling (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996) and Responsive Therapy (Gerber, 1986), the authors provide an analogy for the structure of counseling by comparing it to the choreography of dance. After briefly reviewing other structures (scientific process and medical-delivery procedure) the authors present an alternative an advanced art form: the choreography of counseling. In professional counseling, as in a dance performance, there is the introduction, the exploration, the exposition, and the resolution. Principles and techniques are given for success in each of the four stages.

The Choreography of Counseling

Introduction

Counseling can be viewed as a scientific process, a medical delivery procedure, or as an advanced art form. Each of these three viewpoints carries advantages as well as limitations.

Scientific Process

Building a scientific base for counseling has been both rewarding and frustrating. Like other scientific applications, isolating factors to study them risks their distortion or difficulty in generalizing back into their applied context. The myriad variables involved in any therapeutic approach, the great number of differing approaches to counseling, and the limitations caused by pragmatic and ethical issues make the interpretation of counseling as a scientific process a daunting task. At the same time, counseling is a "young science" and, as such, its dynamics require continued redefinition, testing and refinement: hallmarks of the scientific process.

Medical Procedure

When framed as a medical-delivery procedure, counseling techniques or approaches are used with clients whereby careful records are kept as to pre-morbid and post-morbid conditions. When sufficient change is recorded in a pre- and post-assessment format with a single client, curative power is imputed to the approach. When the same or greatly similar approaches demonstrate an expected change across many clients, an "if...then" case is made for the power of the approach to produce desired changes.

Much of counseling, historically, is based on a medical model, one of diagnosis and application of categorical treatment. Applying a medical procedure model to professional

counseling is, at best, a state of being unfinished, as witnessed by the frequent revision of diagnostic guidelines.

Advanced Art Form

Counseling as an advanced art form has not been a popular way of looking at therapeutic dynamics, yet it may hold some valuable insights into professional helping. The validation of art tends toward the mystical: whatever evolves as "good" is verified by artists.

In comparing counseling to an advanced art form, Purkey and Schmidt (1996) referred to Ginger Rogers, the beautiful Hollywood dancer who, in a response to an observation that she made dance look easy, said, "That's why it's magic." The seemingly effortless performance of an accomplished dancer understates the painstaking effort, personal discipline, and intentionality that are required for a good performance; the same can be said for professional counseling.

Borrowing from dance, the following is a broad conceptualization of the choreographed movements of therapy. Dancers talk of "blocking out" the performance; i.e., separating the final performance into stages: (1) the introduction (including staging, props, costumes), (2) the exploration of themes, (3) the exposition of the plot, and (4) the resolution of tensions. Counseling lends itself to these four stages.

The Introduction

Variables important to the introduction include the setting, the attitude or philosophy of the therapist, and the facilitative or inhibitive nature of the environment. Seasoned counselors take into account the importance of the total environment.

One model which focuses on dynamics of the introduction is Invitational Counseling (Purkey & Schmidt, 1996). By careful analysis of the people, policies, processes, places, and programs involved in any human environment, the counselor can create an introductory setting which is sensitive, humane, caring, and ethically appropriate.

An intentionally inviting introduction for counseling is based on four assumptions:

1. Clients are able, valuable, capable of self-direction, and should be treated accordingly.
2. Counseling is a cooperative, collaborative alliance in which process is an important as product.
3. Clients possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavors.
4. This potential can best be realized by places, policies, and programs that are intentionally designed to invite development, and by counselors who consistently seek to realize this potential in their clients and themselves.

Without drawing attention to its dynamics, the intentionally inviting counselor communicates to the client:

1. You are important; nothing else at this time is of greater consideration than you and your concerns.
2. The processes you are to encounter are user-friendly, and you will be treated in a respectful manner.

3. There is every reason to believe that you have the resources to find ways to handle your concerns.

From an artistic viewpoint, the introduction carries important messages about the dynamics of the performance. Aspects established in the introduction stage are continued throughout the "dance."

The Exploration

The exploration stage in artistic pieces may be relatively brief or it may encompass the major time and energy of the work. Historically, therapists devoted incredible amounts of time to exploration--even hundred of sessions. From the viewpoint of aiding in major personality change, there may be merit in the use of prolonged work with a therapist, but under contemporary constraints of managed health care and third-party payments, an economically motivated mandate of ten sessions or fewer per client is the rule. The task the counselor faces is to allow time for the exploration stage and, at the same time, preserve enough time for exposition and resolution.

One counseling approach, Responsive Therapy (Gerber, 1986), prescribes approximately three one-hour sessions for exploration. This typically provides enough time to arrive at a definition of client circumstance and style. Responsive Therapy casts the client in the disclosing role with studious avoidance of restrictions to that role. The client is the highest authority on himself or herself, while the counselor is the expert on communication dynamics.

Through precise and skilled use of communication skills, the counselor invites the client to disclose progressively more definitive, more complete descriptions of the unique circumstances faced by, and as experienced by, the client. In addition, the client is summoned cordially to disclose means for resolution that have been tried unsuccessfully. These efforts reveal the problem-solving style most relied on by the client. Clients evolve in their awareness and their

responsiveness as they learn from telling their stories more completely and more thoroughly than anyone has ever invited them to do so before.

One important dynamic of the exploration stage as advocated both by Responsive Therapy and Invitational Counseling is the studious avoidance of questioning by the therapist. Questions create an interaction dynamic whereby the client is required to provide information to fit into the thinking pattern of the therapist. This works nicely with scientific processes and medical models; it works terribly if client understanding is the goal.

By relying on indirect leads, furthering responses, paraphrases, reflections, and careful inferences, the counselor can more nearly enter into the perceptual world of the client. Most clients will disclose more quickly and more completely when invited to describe themselves and their conditions without interrogation (i.e., Counselor: "Tell me about yourself." Client: "What do you want to know?" Counselor: "Whatever you want to disclose.") The initial sessions are time for client ventilation and testing by the client of the therapeutic milieu.

The counselor's skill in eliciting explicit disclosure during the exploration stage facilitates a clear vision on the part of both the counselor and client of the unique client circumstance and style. This permits cooperation in the identification or selection of the desired outcomes of intervention, intentionality in the selection of intervention strategies, and partnership of client and counselor in achieving those outcomes.

The Exposition

Unlike ballet, which is scripted to a predetermined outcome, but very much like improvisation in extemporary dance forms, counseling provides for strategies to rewrite the final act. The

revision in the script is made possible by the counselor's understanding and following the client's circumstance and style, again without interrogation.

Responsive Therapy and Invitational Counseling recommend focusing on the perceptual world of the client, as a foundation for choosing interventions with a high probability of success. Near the end of the second or third interview, the counselor may share with the client his or her perception of what is going on (client circumstance) and of how the client is trying to deal with these circumstances (client style). Upon verification by the client as to the accuracy of the description, the counselor identifies intervention options and makes recommendations for proceeding to the resolution phase. At this juncture, either a formal or a soft contract may be made which defines the type of intervention, probable time frame, and anticipated outcomes.

The Resolution

Blocking out the resolution phase is a matter of knowing the dynamics of change required to accomplish the client's goals. By carefully blocking out or orchestrating this phase of counseling, the counselor may be more efficient in selecting the strategy most tailored to the unique situation and style of the client.

A casual overview of professional approaches to counseling suggests that most are worded as though they cover the entire counseling process, yet their focus tends to be strongly on only one or two of the phases just elaborated. Major differences are accounted for by a thorough analysis of one of the phases, with a more superficial treatment of the others. In the language of Invitational Counseling, the most professional approach is to be intentionally inviting in each phase.

By emphasizing the choreography of counseling, the professional helper blends the four aspects of counseling--introduction, exploration, exposition and resolution--into a seamless whole. At its best, the choreography of counseling becomes invisible. To borrow from the writing of Chuang-tse, an ancient Chinese philosopher, the choreography of counseling should "flow like water, reflect like a mirror, and respond like an echo." In its purest form, professional counseling, like the choreography of the dance, remains unseen. The dancer and the dance become one.

References

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