

FORTY PLUS

HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S
MY BROTHER

NACCW CONFERENCE 2015 JACQUI
MICHAEL

Origins of this song

There are a few versions of the origin of these words.

In 1884, James Wells, Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland in his book *The Parables of Jesus* tells the story of a little girl carrying a big baby boy. Seeing her struggling, someone asked if she wasn't tired.

With surprise she replied, "No, he's not heavy; he's my brother."

The most common one and the one which I really enjoy because it ties in with where I am in my child and youth care career at present is the following:

Origins of this song

The title "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" came from the motto for Boys Town, a community formed in 1917 by a Catholic priest named Father Edward Flanagan.

Located in Omaha, Nebraska, it was a place where troubled or homeless boys could come for help. In 1941, Father Flanagan was looking at a magazine called The Messenger when he came across a drawing of a boy carrying a younger boy on his back, with the caption, "He ain't heavy Mr., he's my brother."

Father Flanagan thought the image and phrase captured the spirit of Boys Town, so he got permission and commissioned a statue of the drawing with the inscription, "He ain't heavy Father, he's my brother." The statue and phrase became the logo for Boys Town. In 1979, girls were allowed and the name was eventually changed to Girls and Boys Town.



The Two Brothers concept precedes the magazine illustration that Father Flanagan saw. In 1921, there was a resident at Boys Town who had difficulty walking. He wore leg braces and the other boys would often take turns giving him a ride on their backs. There is a famous photograph of this boy and one of the other youth giving him a ride and several statues of the Two Brothers on the Home Campus in Omaha.



THE ROAD IS LONG...40 +.....
ME, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND
THE FIELD OF CHILD AND
YOUTH CARE



THE ROAD IS LONG, WITH MANY A WINDING TURN
THAT LEADS US TO WHO KNOWS WHERE, WHO KNOWS WHEN

MY ROAD

My road in this field began in 1971 - some 44 years ago - a naive, good looking, very young, silly little social worker, thinking I could make a difference!

Some 44 years on I am still trying to make a difference and am still naïve, not very young, still good looking, a social worker and a child and youth care professional.

My personal journey has had many long and winding turns and led me from field social work, to residential care social work, to managing children's homes, community development, an Honours in social work, a diploma in management, directing numerous NGO's and finally achieving a masters in child and youth care.

I have done clinical work, consulting, training and am now managing one of Girls and Boys Town campuses - the first one in SA for girls - hence this song has particular significance for me.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When thinking about my professional growth, I want to share some of the theories, skills, people and elements of myself which have influenced me in my 44 years.

Some of the theories are:

- Carl Rogers - **The Person-Centered Approach** - a non-directive approach - highlighting **EMPATHY, CONGRUENCE (genuineness) and UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD (non-judgemental)**. Rogers saw these as personal qualities rather than techniques and they implied that the therapist/counsellor needed to have 'his heart in the right place' rather than only rely on technical expertise. These qualities are essential in any helping relationship.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

➤ Robert Carkuff's theory of counselling builds on Rogers' theories and emphasises that the **relationship** is all important in human growth and development. Carkuff highlighted **EMPATHY, RESPECT, SPECIFICITY** (be specific - avoid vagueness and ambiguity), **GENUINENESS, SELF-DISCLOSURE, CONFRONTATION, IMMEDIACY & CONCRETENESS** (down to earth - no jargon, labelling & generalisations).

➤ Gerard Egan's model of counselling was probably one of the most helpful in my professional development. He emphasised **effective listening** using SOLER, active listening, open-ended questions, silence, focusing, empathy and immediacy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I worked in a clinical setting for 18 years, and was exposed to the **psychodynamic approach** which is often described as 'trying to get inside the head' of individuals in order to make sense of their relationships, experiences and how they see the world.

Important assumptions in this approach are:

- Our behaviour and feelings are powerfully affected by **unconscious motives**
- Our behaviour and feelings as adults are rooted in our **childhood experiences**
- All behaviour has a **cause/reason** (usually unconscious)
- **Projection - transference and counter transference, identification and splitting** are elements to consider when working with people.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- When I started working at Girls and Boys Town some 3 years ago, I became aware of how Cognitive Based Therapy can be applied in Life Space work.
- In the GBT system, there is an emphasis on teaching youth skills. I had always worked using relationships as the main basis of interventions with youth, but came to realise the value of combining relational work with cognitive based techniques. We can have BOTH/AND rather than EITHER/OR!
- When youth come into care, we may not have a relationship with them initially but we can start teaching them skills straight away which gives them some sense of control over themselves and their behaviour.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- While relationships take some time to establish, youth learn skills on a daily basis and experience a sense of achievement early on in their placement.
- Skills teaching helps youth focus on specific problems and gives them confidence and ability to deal with them. The skills teach them to identify and change destructive behaviour patterns and disturbing thought patterns which have a negative influence on their behaviour.
- Each skill is taught with an explanation (a rationale) as to why it will help the youth in their daily living and improve their functioning.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Skills start simply and become more complicated as the youth progresses and they are individually honed according to the young person's referral issues and treatment plan. At the same time as the youth is learning these skills, the cycw is connecting with them and building a relationship. The better the relationship, the more effective the skills teaching.
- The underlying concept behind the cognitive behavioural approach is that thoughts & feelings play a fundamental role in behaviour. Youth learn that while they may not be able to control every aspect of the world around them, they can control how they interpret and deal with aspects of their environment and have some control over their behaviour and it's impact.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I can never emphasise enough the importance of reading and gaining theoretical knowledge. As cyc professionals, we must understand developmental theories, such as:

- Maslow - physiological, safety and security, love/belonging, self esteem, self actualisation
- Erikson - trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs shame and doubt, initiative vs guilt, industry vs inferiority, identity vs role confusion, intimacy vs isolation, generativity vs stagnation, ego integrity vs despair
- Circle of Courage - belonging, mastery, independence and generosity
- TRIPLE A - assessment, analysis, action and many others

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMON THEMES IN THEORIES AND MODELS
WHICH HAVE SHAPED MY DEVELOPMENT:

- ACTIVE LISTENING WITH UNDERSTANDING
- EMPATHY
- RESPECT
- RELATIONSHIPS
- UNDERSTANDING AND THINKING ABOUT BEHAVIOUR

**BUT I'M STRONG, STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY HIM
HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER**

MY STRENGTH

On this journey, I have often asked myself, where does my strength come from? There have been times when it has failed - after a suicide of one of the youth in my care when I was filled with doubt and self-blame. I asked myself 'Did we make the right decisions, choices, say the right things for this young person? Could we have prevented the suicide? etc. etc.'

We have to find the resources and strengths to carry us through these times and know when to step back and care for ourselves.

My strength over the years has come from my religious and spiritual beliefs, the role models in my life, my partner, my parents and teachers, my colleagues, mentors, friends and family members who have shown me the joy and value of caring for others.

What have you identified as your strengths?

**WE ALL FEEL LIKE HIDING AT TIMES,
ESPECIALLY WHEN WE FEEL WE'VE
MESSED UP - FIND YOUR BEST PLACE!**



SKILLS

Having knowledge is not enough. We must use the knowledge in practice and develop skills. We must make mistakes and be corrected.

Never be afraid to change the way you are doing something!
If you see a better way of doing it - drop the pride and ego and
DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY!!

The youth/families/clients deserve the best we can give!

Keep looking for better ways to do things. **WATCH AND LEARN!**

I wouldn't want a worker who has stopped growing!

Care for yourself! - I like the 4 D's of time management -
DO, DUMP, DELAY AND DELEGATE!

SELF

BE EXCITED

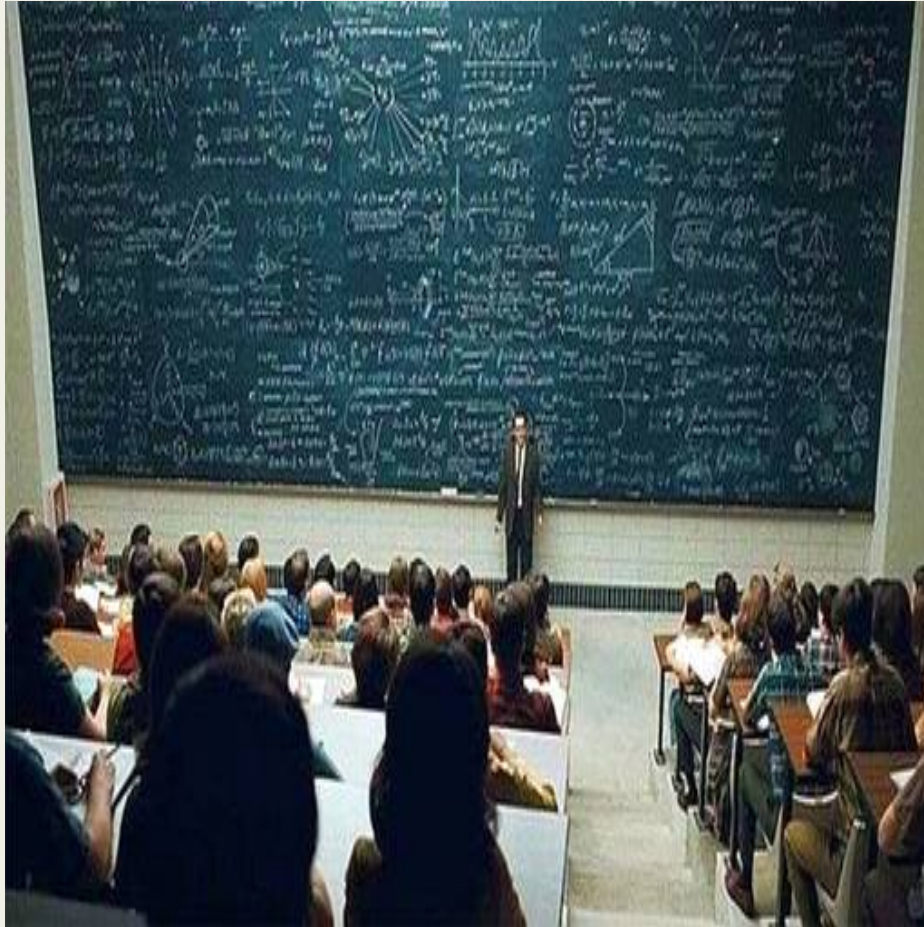


BE CURIOUS



SELF

BE CONFUSED



EXPERIENCE AWESOME



SELF

Over the years I have also come to the realisation of how powerless I actually am! - What a relief!

One of the greatest lessons I have learnt has been to acknowledge and value every person's innate ability, power over their own lives and wisdom. I am constantly amazed and in awe of our youth and families' resilience and their ability to cope in the most dire circumstances.

I believe we are called to care!

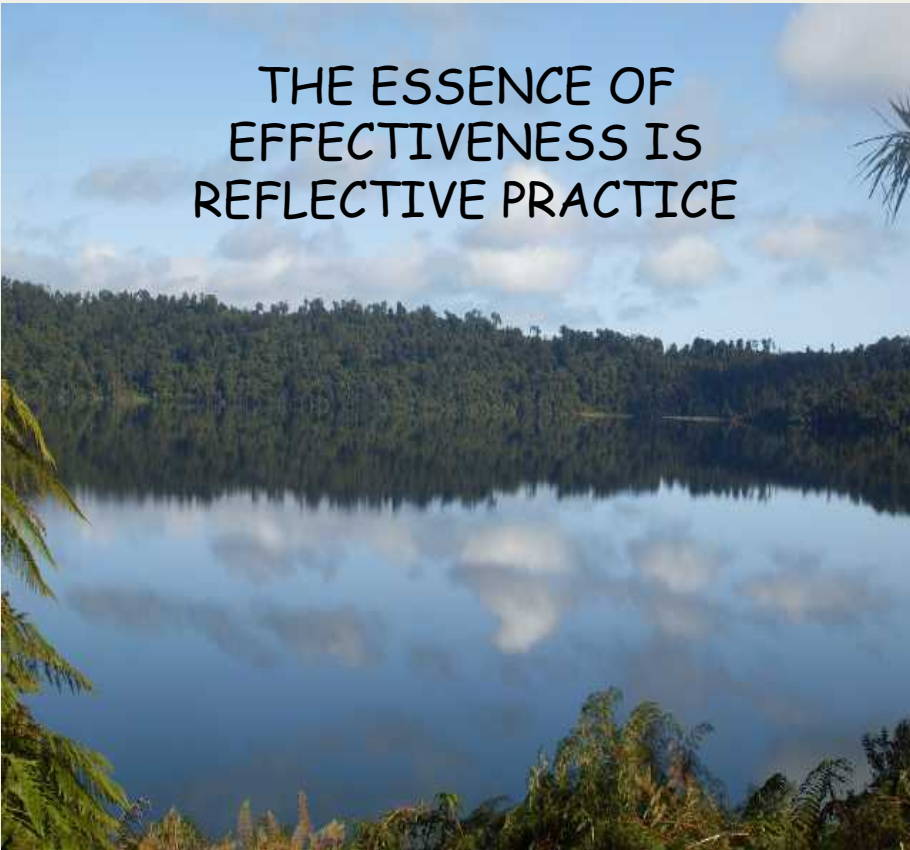
Always look for people who are cleverer than you are and who know more than you do! **LISTEN** to them!

READ all you can - many professionals have written amazing cyc literature in our field.

SELF

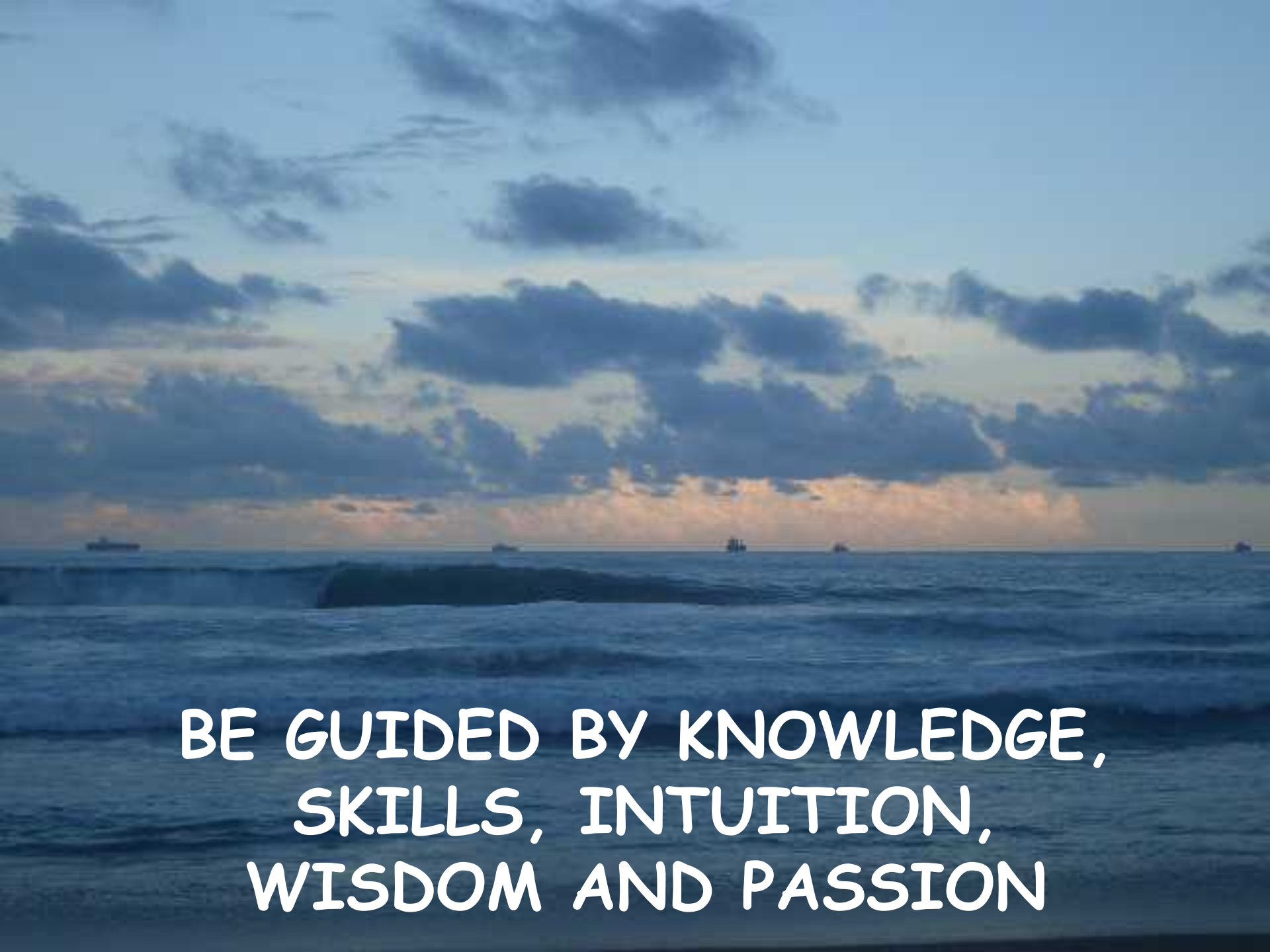
Personal strength comes from self awareness & *reflection*;
professional strength comes from supervision & *reflection*.
Think about everything you do - before and afterwards!

THE ESSENCE OF
EFFECTIVENESS IS
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A photograph of a calm lake reflecting a dense forested shore and a cloudy sky. The water is still, creating a clear mirror image of the sky and the trees. The foreground shows some green foliage.

CONTEMPLATION

A photograph of a person sitting on the edge of a cliff, looking out at a vast ocean under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The person is small in the frame, emphasizing the vastness of the sea and sky. The cliff edge is rocky and covered with some vegetation.

A wide-angle photograph of the ocean at dusk or dawn. The sky is filled with large, dark, textured clouds, with a band of lighter, orange-tinged clouds near the horizon. The sea is dark blue with white-capped waves. In the middle ground, a large, dark, elongated shape, likely a whale, is breaching the water's surface. Several small, dark silhouettes of ships are visible on the horizon line.

BE GUIDED BY KNOWLEDGE,
SKILLS, INTUITION,
WISDOM AND PASSION

SO ON WE GO, HIS WELFARE IS MY CONCERN
NO BURDEN IS HE TO BEAR, WE'LL GET THERE

YOUTH

The determination of youth in all the years I have worked with them is one of the factors which has always amazed me! - their determination to survive, their determination to outsmart the 'welfare', their determination to keep us guessing and constantly trying to be one step ahead of us!

WHAT DETERMINATION!

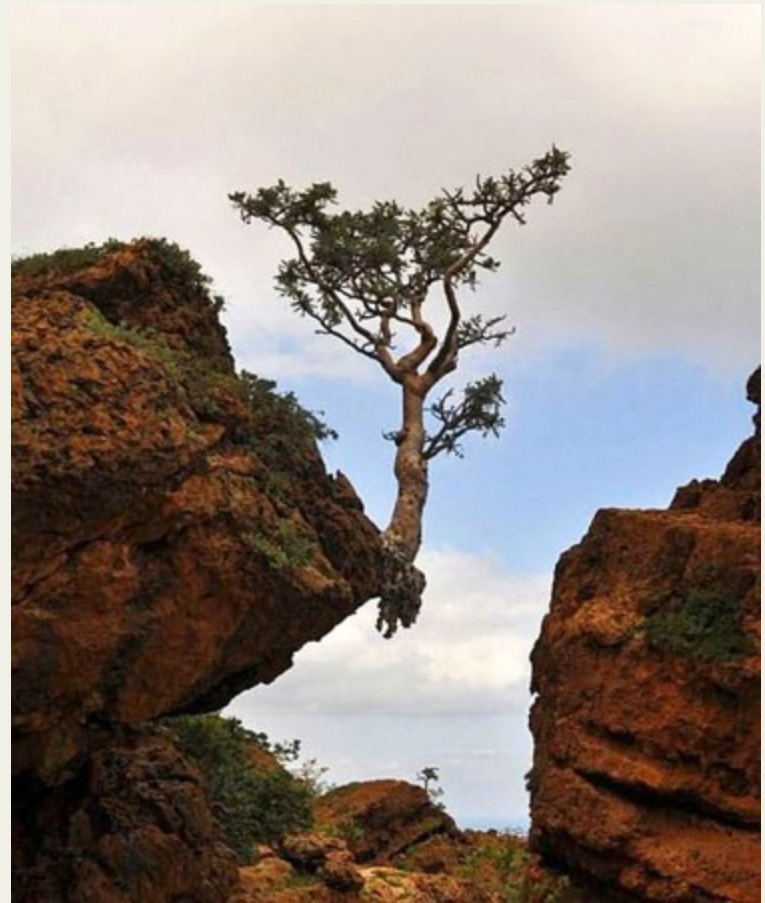


YOUTH

The resilience of youth with whom I have worked has indeed made me appreciate that they are NOT the burden - they are the motivation for doing what I do! I figure - if they can survive what they have been dealt, I have nothing to complain about!

Burdens are easier when you have resources provided for you - our youth often have to find their own resources and be that much more creative, innovative, stronger and determined! I marvel at their tenacity!

TENACITY!



FOR I KNOW, HE WOULD NOT ENCUMBER ME HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER YOUTH

Let us appreciate what youth have had to deal with in the past 40 years. They have had to carry and be encumbered by the burden of caring for others due to increased poverty, unemployment of family members, the effects of HIV/AIDS on their families and communities, the onslaught of technology, the changes in the education system, the increased competition, the transformation of South African society, increased family violence and abuse, drugs and substance abuse and the resultant social problems this has caused.

We learn so much from our youth - especially humility!



YOUTH

HOPE



ASPIRATIONS





BE THE FOOTSTEPS IN
THE SAND BESIDE THEM

**IF I'M LADEN AT ALL, I'M LADEN WITH SADNESS
THAT EVERYONE'S HEART ISN'T FILLED WITH THE GLADNESS
OF LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Another lesson I have learnt over the years is the amazing perseverance of most families in their fight for their children. It is no mean feat to take on the 'welfare system.' We are often quick to judge what parents and families have and haven't done, but true empathy for families is something I have often found lacking.

I have seldom encountered families who do not care about their children - perhaps they do not have the skills, knowledge or resources to look after them, but the love and care is seldom lacking!

LOVE THE YOUTH - LOVE THEIR FAMILIES! BE GLAD THESE YOUTH HAVE FAMILIES, EVEN IF WE DO NOT THINK THEY ARE PERFECT - WE AREN'T!



PERSEVERANCE!

**IT'S A LONG, LONG ROAD, FROM WHICH THERE IS NO RETURN
WHILE WE'RE ON THE WAY TO THERE, WHY NOT SHARE**

FIELD OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

One of the greatest challenges in the past 40+ years for me has being part of the development of the child and youth care field in SA!

From very small beginnings - one of the first members of the NACCW's then 'Transvaal' region to belonging to this amazing organisation as it is today, has been a remarkable journey.

My growth as a child and youth care professional has been mainly due to the exposure offered by the NACCW of which I have been a greater or lesser part since 1976. I recall when we started linking the regions and asked Brian Gannon if he would be able to come to each region once a month to run workshops for us. Each of the 4 regions agreed to contribute R50 per month to pay Brian for his time and flights! There were many months when we did not have the money to pay Brian and he worked tirelessly promoting the field and compiling the child and youth care journal with no payment! I was truly inspired by Brian - the founder of NACCW and remain inspired by his writings and comments on the cyc-net to this day. What a blessing to have a person of this calibre in our country!

FIELD OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

At the end of the 1960's, the first Association of Child Care Workers was formed in the Western Cape with others following in Transvaal, Natal and Eastern Cape. These local associations joined in 1975 to form the NACCW. Over the years, the NACCW has fought for training for cycw's, courses, registration of cycw's, equality in the field, diversity, norms and standards in care and many of these have been realised.

During Apartheid years, there were legislated different levels of services for different race groups of children and finances were unequally allocated according to race.

Resources were not equally distributed and in the 1980's, there were only 5 black private children's homes in SA, 80 for white children, 5 for Indian and 24 for Coloured children.

The very first recommendation of the first Biennial Conference of NACCW in Cape Town in 1971, was: "This Conference does not accept that there should be differences in the standards of care as implied by the differences in subsidies paid for the various race groups".

FIELD OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

I recall a decision taken in the early days in NACCW when we were struggling for funds and were debating as to whether we would ask the State to assist us. We agreed that we would not take State funds unless they acknowledged the diversity of NACCW. They declined and we declined their funding.

We shared our skills and knowledge with each other tirelessly and have thus fought for and developed the field of child and youth care in SA.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on young people at risk which was formed in 1994 gave great impetus to the development of norms and standards for children and youth at risk and for residential care centres.

Our sharing has been the basis of our growth in this field! We have not always agreed but we have continued to share knowledge, skills, ideas and resources.

When there have been common enemies threatening children and youth in our country, we have united!

**BE PREPARED TO STAND UP FOR CHILDREN,
FAMILIES AND THE PROFESSION - BE
PREPARED TO HAVE A BIG PRESENCE & VOICE!**



AND THE LOAD, DOESN'T WEIGH ME DOWN AT ALL
HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER

HE'S MY BROTHER
HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER
HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER

We cannot be weighed down if we keep in mind our calling, our responsibility, the needs of our youth/their families and our **passion and compassion** - as Don Materra emphasises - **compassion and humanity** exceed all else!

We are called to carry the pain and sadness of those who need our skills and knowledge and - let us be selfless in sharing these.

Let us give tirelessly emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally to our youth and their families.



BE PREPARED TO LOOK
SCARY & SOMETIMES
STAND ALONE BUT AT
OTHER TIMES, BE
PREPARED TO CARRY
EACH OTHER

"THE SONG"

Bob Russell wrote the lyrics and Bobby Scott wrote the music.

Video links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYzfTdlZoP0>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_xzD8Pn4nM