

# LOSS AND LIFE IN A PERSON-CENTERED COMMUNITY EDITORIAL

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"There's a lot of joys and sorrows, but they all enrich life." (Alicia, after the death of her father, cited in Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1999, p. 143.)

Much has changed since our last issue. I had planned to dedicate this issue to Jo Cohen-Hamilton. Jo has been a nurturing mother figure for *The Person-Centered Journal*. As the journal's fourth Editor-in-Chief, she encouraged use of the Internet, and established a system for coaching new authors. She broadened the journal's content to include more poetry, expressive arts, education and other person-centered work in addition to counseling and psychotherapy. While nurturing, she has also pushed the journal to be all it can be, insisting on honest and thorough peer review of all contributions.

Some of you have probably read the recent Special Issue of the *American Psychologist* (March, 2000, 57(3)). That issue examined the consequences for American Psychology that the flagship journal of The American Psychological Association first ignored, and then tried to avoid, the political ramifications of its content. The problems for The American Psychological Association were compounded by a complex and secretive editorial policy that destroyed trust between an author, an action editor, the Editor-in-Chief, and the journal's board. Under Jo's leadership *The Person-Centered Journal* has not shied away from controversial content. We also encourage authors to think about how their conclusions might be heard in the larger community and respond to potential misapplication of what was said. Our review process has been open, with authors and reviewers corresponding to each other directly, and the editor keeping authors apprised of decisions regarding publication and the reasons behind those decisions. I believe that we have demonstrated to the scientific community that peer review can be rigorous, constructive and open.

It was with great sadness and some fear that I learned of Jo's decision to resign from her Managing Editor post. As Managing Editor Jo continued to recruit authors and reviewers, supervised many reviews, reviewed articles herself, supervised the formatting and layout of the journal, and managed our finances. She has been thoroughly reliable and trustworthy in a demanding volunteer position. She has been wonderful to work with and has become a closer friend in the process.

In these past few months we have also experienced the deaths of two esteemed and loved members of our community. John Shlien was a member of our Board of Directors. He was instrumental in encouraging Jo Cohen Hamilton to take the position of Editor-in-Chief. He was a frequent contributor and reviewer. He was known to me and to many others as outgoing, warm, nurturing and scholarly. John died on March 23, 2002. His obituary, written lovingly by his wife Helen, is published in this issue, and the entire issue is dedicated to his memory.

Ruth Sanford died this past November 28. Ruth was an active member of The Association for the Development of the Person-Centered Approach, the larger Person-Centered community and the world. Ruth was a valued contributor to The Person-Centered Journal. She is lovingly remembered in this issue, in an article by her long-time companion and colleague, Ed Bodfish. Ed is also planning a summary of Ruth's memorial service for *Renaissance*.

Loss often stimulates us to look back on life and consider what is really important (Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1999). In this issue, Françoise Ducroux-Biass has contributed an international perspective on the nature of professional counseling. Originally conceived as a translation of her previously published article in the Portuguese Journal *a Pessoa Como Centro*, Françoise worked hard with her primary reviewer to go beyond a literal translation of the words. This (American) English language version has been written to include cultural translations as well as linguistic meanings.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA, I requested papers on person-centered responses to trauma. I did not have any preconception of what that might be. I was impressed by the account of trauma given by a psychotherapist in an informal presentation I'd heard a month earlier at the American Psychological Association meeting in San Francisco. He described his empathy for a patient who had killed his (patient's) mother and nearly killed him and another therapist in a nearby office, during a family session. His empathy had helped to heal him and provided insights on how he could prevent this from happening again. This meaningful response seemed very person-centered, but also inapplicable to a situation where the attackers are unknown.

Following the September 11 attacks, ethnic hatred seemed to grow. Synagogues in France and California were vandalized and burned. My own synagogue in California was marked with swastikas on two recent occasions. One was during a service to remember victims of the Holocaust. In April, 2002, arsonists burned a nearby church. Most of the church's members identify as Palestinian-American. Lauren Hancz, Judith Flores, Karen Breidinger, Katherine Martin, Liayn Mercado, Eric Macklin, Maura Daly Foraker, Stephen Mickulik, Barbara Malcolm, Steve Kachmar and Jo Cohen Hamilton were the first to respond to my call for papers. Their collection of thoughts on personal power helped to remind me that we can fight terrorism from within, by reminding ourselves of what we can still control. While that is not an adequate solution for me by itself, it is an encouraging place to start.

Loss can stimulate us to consider who we are, and who we are not. Comparing theories of psychotherapy helps me in the same way as a therapist. Ronnie Barracato,

Ned Gaylin and Richard Bryan-Jeffries' articles on Bateson's Family Systems model and the Person-Centered Approach move back and forth between meta-analysis of behavior and the effect of semantics on our impression of individual persons. Hopefully we can learn from both.

Barbara Brodley, in this issue, adds further clarity to her previous work on therapist intention in Person-Centered Therapy. Barbara's work demonstrates unwavering trust in the client, which allows the therapist to express empathy without being distracted by strategies for encouraging change. I was reminded of Bateson's Systems theory again when Barbara observed that there is no conflict between client and therapist when the therapist abstains from instrumental intentions.

Jania Janowska's approach to promoting humanism in the classroom is the first of a series of articles promised by her on person-centered applications in education. It stands in contrast to the Brodley article, opening with a statement of the author's intention to change the students she teaches. Together, these two practice-oriented papers demonstrate some of the breath of possible attitudes, behaviors and applications that share a Person-Centered identity. These two articles also poignantly demonstrate the importance of culture and context in shaping our expression of person-centered beliefs. The teaching methods described in this first "workshop" article on teaching are different from those described by Rogers in *Freedom to learn* (Rogers, 1969). The classroom in Poland is also different, as are the expectations of the students. Jania's approach makes Person-Centered theory relevant to her students.

Concurrent with our sense of loss, our journal is also experiencing some growing pains as our community has responded positively to our call for papers. Ideally a journal should have more than enough current submissions to fill its next two issues, to allow for thorough and careful peer review. Please continue to look at your own work and that of your colleagues and friends and promote scholarly sharing of all that is person-centered.

#### REFERENCES

- Nolen-Hoeksema, S. & Larson, J. (1999). *Coping with loss*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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