

# Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach Revisited

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## Abstract

*Relational Child and Youth Care is articulated through twenty-five characteristics which are organized in a three-part framework of ways of being, interpreting, and doing. These characteristics seek to express Child and Youth Care practice in the life-space and in the moment of interaction between the practitioner and the young person, family, or community. This revision comes after nearly fifteen years from the first expression of the characteristics and is based on extensive feedback and observations from around the world. It includes a focus on inclusive practice related to culture, race, trauma, and other historic contexts important to the Child and Youth Care field.*

## Introduction

### **A Brief History of the Characteristics**

In 2004, Garfat (2004a) identified characteristics, drawn from research, classic and contemporary literature and his and others' experience of the field, which were thought to identify a Child and Youth Care (CYC) approach to caring. These characteristics were updated by Fulcher and Garfat (2008) when writing about their applicability in foster care and then again in a review of applications of a relational Child and Youth Care approach in a special issue of the *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* journal (2011). These applications were further developed in



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*Making Moments Meaningful in CYC Practice* (Garfat, Fulcher & Digney, 2013), in *Child and Youth Care in Practice* (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012), and in *Child and Youth Care Practice with Families* (Fulcher & Garfat, 2015). Subsequent writings expressed how the characteristics were applicable to specific practices of supervision (Charles, Freeman & Garfat, 2016) and trauma responsive care (Freeman, 2015a). These characteristics are again updated and presented here based on readings, workshops, conferences, discussions and insights drawn from the field in the past few years.

### **About this Revision**

This updated version of the 25 characteristics represents a significant enhancement from previous versions. It acknowledges and includes many significant voices that are important to the field. It also acknowledges that the field of Child and Youth Care has, over a period of decades, been complacent in its approach to centering the lived experiences of Indigenous, racialized, non-binary gendered, neuro-diverse bodies, presenting instead a list of characteristics that can be read as fundamentally 'white', ablelist, and heteronormative (Gharabaghi, 2016; Vachon, 2018, Skott-Myhre, 2017). We have also learned a lot about the effects of trauma on young people, including generational trauma as well as abuse and neglect.

This new version of the 25 characteristics is not a critique of previous versions; it is instead a way of re-contextualizing the characteristics within lived experiences and intersectionalities in an effort to provide a foundation (albeit one in need of constant growth and adaptation) for Child and Youth Care practice moving forward. Collectively, we set out to reimagine the 25 characteristics by engaging over 100 Child and Youth Care involved people (broadly defined) from North America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe in order to open dialogue among differently located and positioned individuals to reflect on the characteristics and provide suggestions for rendering these commensurate with the many different ways people are connected to the field. Through this process, the 25 characteristics were reviewed by individuals with longstanding involvement in



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the field and its community, as well as by many individuals thinking and writing from perspectives and with identities reflecting various contexts including trauma, multiple racial, gender, ability/disability, sexual orientation, and class positions.

In reflecting on the feedback we received, we must first express how grateful we are that so many individuals provided detailed, serious, meaningful suggestions for shifting the nuances and the scope of the 25 characteristics to such an inclusive and relevant space. We are especially grateful for the feedback from individuals who have long encountered barriers, sometimes invisible to us, in attempting to access this field and the community that comes with it. We are equally grateful for the expression of relevance and meaning that these characteristics have in such diverse geographies, experiences and cultural spaces. We heard about how these characteristics have been helpful in Isibindi projects in South Africa, in residential settings across Canada, in post-secondary education settings in Europe, North America and Africa, and in community-based child and youth care services in Australia and Asia. We learned that the field, broadly defined, is fundamentally interested in continuing discussions and exploration of the following themes:

- The role of power embedded in racist ideologies, state and institutional structures, and cultural hegemonies;
- A critical perspective on the universality of core concepts, including care, love and relational practice;
- The importance of historical events and practices and their connection to generational and on-going trauma;
- Acknowledging, especially in Canada, the United States and Australia, Indigenous ways of knowing, experiencing, and sharing;
- Framing Child and Youth Care practice as an approach rather than a rigidly defined professional practice with impenetrable borders for individuals and groups of people with different lived experiences based on race, gender, ability/disability and other criteria.



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We also learned about, and are pleased to express our commitment to, the need for on-going reflection on, and revision of, these 25 characteristics, always with the voices of diverse individuals and groups as partners. In many respects, we (the authors) do not own these characteristics. They belong to our diverse field and the people who are drawing on these characteristics as a way of being in the world.

## **Defining a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach**

We believe that Child and Youth Care practitioners are ideally situated to be among the most influential of healers and helpers in a person or family's life. For many years, the work that Child and Youth Care practitioners do was considered, at best, a sub-profession and the workers themselves were frequently considered to be extensions of other helping professionals, most commonly Social Workers (Garfat & Charles, 2010). However, with the passage of time and the evolution of a distinct approach to practice, Child and Youth Care (CYC)<sup>1</sup> and CYC practitioners, like social pedagogues in Europe and child care workers in South Africa, have come to be recognized as possessing a specific expertise and a unique approach to working with children, youth and families (Fulcher & Garfat, 2015; Mann-Feder, Scott, & Hardy, 2017; Thumbadoo, 2008; ) involving a “comprehensive framework for being with young people in relational and authentic ways” (Gharabaghi, 2017a, p. 5).

A CYC practitioner's position in the daily life of another person, and/or their family and community, allows the practitioner to intervene proactively, responsively and immediately to assist others to develop different ways of acting and experiencing in the world (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008). There is no other form of

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<sup>1</sup> The term Child and Youth Care (CYC) is used here in both the specific and generic sense. While it does refer to those practitioners in a variety of countries who carry the title of CYC worker, it also refers to those who might practice within a Child and Youth Care framework but be identified with different titles such as youth worker, social pedagogue, residential social worker, and across multiple settings.



helping which is so immediate, so grounded in the present experiencing or, one might say, so everyday. This immediacy of being present as helpers creates in-the-moment learning opportunities (Ward, 1998) allowing the individual to experiment with alternative ways of acting and experiencing as they are living their lives. CYC practice is not oriented around temporally spaced and infrequent visits to an office where the 'client' meets with a therapist who has little to no experience of the individual's experiences in everyday life. Rather, it is based on being in-the-moment with the individual(s), experiencing their life and living with it them as it unfolds (Baizerman, 1999; Winfield, 2008), within an inclusive, rights-based, anti-oppressive and trauma-informed framework that extends from the nature of inter-personal relations to the engagement of systemic and institutional features of injustice (Daniel, 2016). Child and youth care practice seeks to avoid the pitfalls of being with others as framed eloquently by Hooks (2000): "When we face pain in relationships, our first response is to sever bonds rather than to maintain commitment." We remember, always, that young people are the authors of their own story (history) and, ultimately, the agents of their own change (Gharabaghi & Stuart, 2011).

Child and Youth Care practice is based on helping people think about and live their life differently, as they are living it (Freeman, 2015b; Garfat, 2002). It is a focused, timely, practical and, above all, immediately responsive form of caring which uses "applied learning and daily uses of knowledge to inform more responsive daily encounters with children or young people" (Fulcher 2004, p. 34). It is immediate and focused on the moment as it is occurring. It allows for the individual to learn, experience and practice different thoughts, feelings and actions in the most important area of their lives – daily life as they are living it (Gannon, 2014; Mucina, 2012).

We recognize that becoming involved in a person's or family's life is more than an inter-personal process; it requires an engagement with the context of history and its consequences, including, for example, the histories of residential schools and deeply embedded biases impacting Indigenous communities across North



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America, as well as anti-Black racism, gender normativity, sexual conservatism, neuro-diversity and other histories of oppression and racism around the world. Still we believe that Child and Youth Care practitioners are ideally situated to impact the circumstances of young people, their families and their communities precisely because CYC practice offers a unique way of being in the world, and therefore of being with young people, their families, and their communities in the context of their present situation.

## **The Characteristics as a Framework for Practice**

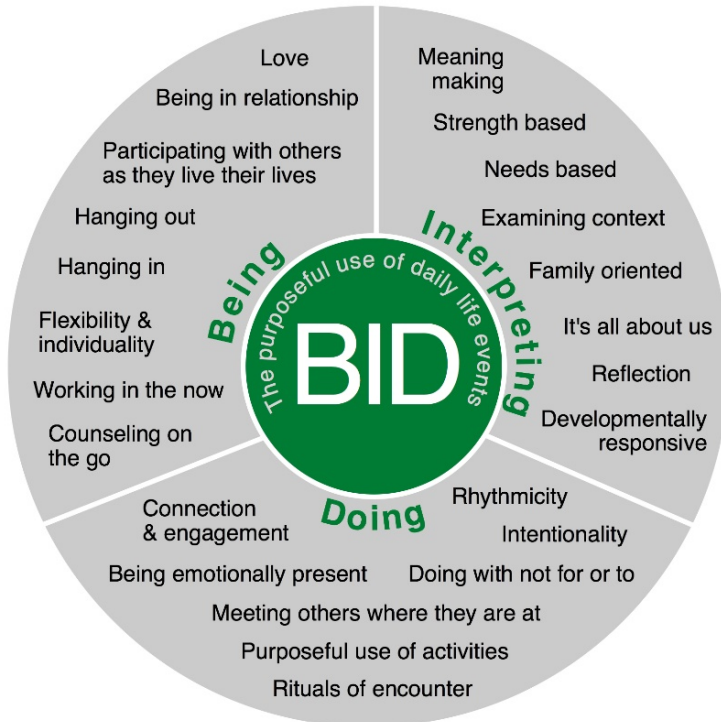
The diagram below (Freeman & Garfat, 2014) shows how these characteristics of a Child and Youth Care approach are arranged around the purposeful use of daily life events and grouped according to processes of Being, Interpreting and Doing (Freeman & Garfat, 2014). These characteristics are foundational to our way of being, interpreting and doing in our work, wherever our work is located. They characterize the Child and Youth Care way of being in the world with other(s).

This approach outlined by these characteristics aims for inclusiveness, an equitable joining together of all who participate in the field. Thus, one might be, for example, a Child and Youth Care worker, a CYC instructor, a family worker, a trainer, a youth advocate, a community development worker, a researcher, a supervisor, etc. What binds them together, as CYC practitioners, is the shared approach to their work. Thus, CYC practitioners are connected by how they think about and carry out their work. Child and Youth Care is, after all, an ‘approach’ or a way of being in the world with others. So, we aim here to be inclusive while acknowledging the historic context of trauma, power, and ‘privilege and cultural singularity’ (Gharabaghi, 2017b) which is the history of our field. Indeed, as Skott-Myhre said, all of us “need to seek to be accountable to our privilege in real and material ways” (2017, p. 17) and recognize the political aspects of our work.



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### Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach

Freeman, J. & Garfat, T. (2014). Being, interpreting, doing: A framework for organizing the characteristics of a relational child and youth care approach. *Child & Youth Care Online*, 179, 23-27. Retrieved from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/jan2014.pdf>

The 25 characteristics of relational Child and Youth Care Practice are not intended to capture, for example, the limiting world of institutional care and traditional designations within the professional field of Child and Youth Care. They are, quite to the contrary, meant to reflect a particular approach to 'being with', whether this is framed around euro-centric ideas of developmental growth or, for



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example, Indigenous ideas about the ‘Healing Path’ (McCabe, 2007). Ultimately, the Characteristics are about child and youth care practice in the life-space and in the moment. They do not represent an analysis of social systems, institutions or processes. They make no attempt to comprehensively capture the richness of literature that speaks to anti-oppressive practices, marginalization, system change and advocacy. And they are certainly not meant to provide a foundation for policy frameworks. The characteristics speak to how we are with young people, in all of their diversity and life experiences, understanding that people’s lives are very much impacted by social structures, power relations, racism, exclusion, marginalization and other dynamics.

## **Relational Child and Youth Care Practice**

*Relational* Child and Youth Care practice is an approach in which attention is directed towards ‘the in-between between us’ (Garfat, 2008). As Bellefeuille and Jamieson noted “relational practice is a dynamic, rich, flexible, and continually evolving process of co-constructed inquiry. In this type of inquiry, meaning emerges within the ‘space between’ the individual, family, or community” (2008, p. 38). The co-constructed nature of the in-between is a central feature of effective relational Child and Youth Care practice. Without a focus on the in-between between us, there is no relational practice.

This co-created space, *the in-between between us*, represents the ‘hub of the wheel’ around which all characteristics of Child and Youth Care practice revolve. We often call this co-created space between us the relationship, but relational practice involves much more than just ‘having a relationship’ (whether good or not) with another person. Rather, it means that the practitioner is constantly attending to the co-created space between self and other, wondering – for example – ‘Is it a safe enough place?’, ‘Is it a learning space?’ ‘Is it a developmentally appropriate place of experience?’ ‘Is it a place of pain? Of joy?’ ‘Of inclusion and equity?’ The practitioner also continuously reflects on the nature of power embedded within this co-created space, recognizing the inherent power imbalance between



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practitioner and young person that can be further accentuated through racial, gender and other expressions of individuality. Honouring the space between Self and other includes an active, present and transparent acknowledgment of power. The focus, however, is more on the characteristics of the co-created relationship itself, than on those of the individuals in the relationship. As Gharabaghi (2014, p. 8) explained “relational practice shifts the focus from the actors engaged in some form of interaction to the experience of interacting regardless of the specific actors”. A focus on the in-between between us, concentrates on the experience itself with an understanding that this experience is subject to, or even mediated by, externally situated and historically burdened structures, institutions, and processes which involved generational trauma, racial, cultural, and material power dynamics.

The creation of this in-between space is impacted by the self-identity, culture, historical context and practice setting of those involved in this co-creating. (Gharabaghi, 2014). How do, for example, the current contexts and cultural histories of a middle-aged Polish male immigrant CYC and an indigenous Cree female teenager from Northern Canada, intersect to impact on the evolution of their relational space in the context of a large city drop-in shelter? It becomes complex indeed.

A focus on the ‘in-between between us’ ensures that the Child and Youth Care practitioner remains attentive to the mutuality of relationship, recognizing that both parties to the relationship create and are influenced by it (Fewster, 1990, 2001). We are all impacted by our encounter in the in-between. Stuart argued that “the relationship is the intervention” (2009, p. 222) and a focus on the relational aspects of practice, as described here, helps to ensure that the CYC practitioner maintains this focus on the relational in-between. The understanding of the multiple identity dimensions both parties bring to that in-between space and the ways in which those identities can simultaneously intersect and compete, is central to how the relational dynamic unfolds.

As Fewster said, relational practice “is not only a very different perspective; it is a different pathway, across a very different terrain, in search of a very different



destination”. (Fewster, 2005a, p. 3). It is, as Krueger (2004, n.p.) pointed out “a way of being with youth in the lived experience” in which both parties must experience *relational safety* (Garfat, 2016) requiring an inclusive focus on what each bring to the evolution of the relational space. It is a focus on ‘how you are, who you are, while you do what you do’ (Garfat, 2013). Relational practice is a way of being in the world with others in which the focus is on connectedness, not individuation (Fletcher, 1998) or isolation while recognizing that each individual’s experiences can impact on how they are in the world and how they see themselves positioned in the world.

In the following, 25 characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care approach are identified, high-lighted and organised according to a framework we call BID – Being, Interpreting and Doing – which represents an effective foundation for describing the Child and Youth Care process of connecting to promote growth, change and learning (see, for example, Bristow, 2017; Freeman & Garfat, 2014). The BID sections should not be considered as sequential or linear but rather as inherently connected. For example, while I am Doing, I am also still Interpreting and Being. While at times there may be a greater focus on one element of this triad, the practitioner is Being, Interpreting and Doing at all times. The characteristics are conceptualized around the idea of the ‘purposeful use of daily life events’ which we see as central to, and the defining characteristic of, effective relational Child and Youth Care practice. Each of the other characteristics

*“demonstrate how this use of daily life events integrates into the larger CYC approach as well as describe the qualities of those who use daily live events effectively. The use of daily life events links to each of the other characteristics and unifies them in a structured system” (Freeman & Garfat, 2014, 23-27).*



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## Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach

The characteristics and descriptions which follow evolved through discussions, observations, readings, dialogues and other encounters with the field of Child and Youth Care practice, with a focus on the relational. They do not completely reflect, perhaps, how we would 'like' CYC practice to be. Rather they reflect a collective observation of aspects of the field as identified at the time of this writing. Thus, these characteristics represent an inherent tension, in as much as the field *as it is* has often limited itself to very particular mechanisms of inclusion that have inadvertently excluded many lived experiences based on race, gender identity, sexuality, disability and others. The characteristics nevertheless seek to take account of ways of being, ways of interpreting, and ways of doing that seek to be inclusive of lived experiences. We recognise that the field is evolving constantly and expect that these characteristics will become even more defined and expansive in the future.

The characteristics have been organised into three (3) groupings: Being, Interpreting and Doing. This framework (BIDs) evolved from the work of practitioners (Freeman & Garfat, 2014) as a way of thinking about the process of intervention within the field of Child and Youth Care practice. But we are also aware that while we are making bids for connection so, too, young people, when they are able to, make bids to connect with us. While young people sometimes cannot or are not able to make such bids for connection, we are constantly on the alert to notice them, however they might occur.

*“Together the three categories – Being, Interpreting, and Doing – form the acronym BID, highlighting the bids for connection that are at the center of our relational work. To make a bid is the act of making an offer for something. It is an old word dating from before the twelfth century and is defined as an “attempt or effort to win, achieve, or attract” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) as in making a bid for reelection” (Freeman & Garfat, 2014, 25).*



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This framework for organisation highlights anchor characteristics in each of the three areas.

*“The anchor characteristics provide strength and support to the other characteristics within each category. Identifying anchors within each category offers practical guidance to those beginning in the field as they focus on their own development. It prioritizes, in a way, what might be an essential starting point in one’s personal growth and development. The three anchors in this framework include:*

- *Love – in the category of Being*
  - *Meaning making – in the category of Interpreting*
  - *Connection & engagement – in the category of Doing.”*
- (Freeman and Garfat, 2014, p. 26)

The following describes and articulates the 25 characteristics and their relevance in relational Child and Youth Care practice in today’s world.

## **Being**

*“Being in relationship means that we have what it takes to remain open and responsive in conditions where most mortals – and professionals – quickly distance themselves, become ‘objective’ and look for the external ‘fix.’” (Fewster, 2004)*

**Love** serves as a “prerequisite of healthy development” (Smith, 2011) and a lack of a basic love for others and a willingness to be stretched and grow in that love may be an indication of the need for an individual to consider a different field. (Freeman & Garfat, 2014, p. 26).



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*Love is inclusive* – regardless of who, or how, you are, you belong in this endeavor – if you are connected at all, you are a part of it. Extended family, community and community members, people of cultures different than the practitioner, multiple support staff, intimate friends, etc. – all are a part of this process of engaging in an appropriate response to the young person and family, based on this foundation of love. To be inclusive means to accept people for who and how they are while acknowledging that everyone brings to the relational encounter their own history and that history requires recognition, understanding, valuing and acceptance if we are to focus on the creation of relational safety (Garfat, 2016). It means “honoring differences and accepting diversity as a norm” (InclusionBC, 2018).

Inclusiveness also implies that while I invite other(s) to be a part of my experience (process) I also work to create the experiences where they will include me in theirs. Inclusiveness is a goal, often illusive and always significant. It requires that I, as an individual, attend to what helps the other person(s) feel included – how do they prefer to be identified, what is important to them, what would count as an inclusive gesture? I also must attend to how they need me to be in order to want to include me in their world of experience for, if inclusiveness is seen as a one-way street where I am the one ‘including other’, and not worried about them including me, then it is not a relationship based on equity (Marshall, 2017). So, one is constantly wondering ‘how do I need to be or what do I need to do in order for this person to experience inclusion?’ What effort am I applying to this end? The ‘what I have to do?’ may focus on my interaction and may also include ‘how to I need to act on our environmental context so that it expresses and invites inclusion?’ The practitioner recognizes that it may not be possible to be or to become what the young person needs. I cannot be Indigenous or Black or Transgendered if in fact I am white and cis-gendered. But the practitioner can extend the invitation to being with and doing with the young person even in the context of limitations presented by fixed identities. Inclusion is an interactive and an environmental consideration.



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Love, as Thumbadoo (2011) writing from a South African context argued, is present in powerful Child and Youth Care moments with (an) other. She asserts that love must be present when real connections are made between self and other. This is not, of course, a sexual love but a love of (an) other as a human being in the Ubuntu sense of “I am because you are”. Thumbadoo (2011, p. 197) further asserts that “caring and love intermingle in the encounters” between CYC practitioners and others”. While Thumbadoo writes from the South African context, her words are echoed elsewhere. Mark Smith (2011, p. 192), writing from a United Kingdom context, claims that “child and youth care – in contrast perhaps to other professions or aspiring professions – is irredeemably a practical, moral and relational endeavor. As such, it is fertile ground for the growth of love”. Whitfield has said that “love is the most healing of our resources” (1989, p. 133). Relational CYC practice is, in this sense, an act of love and loving – one holds others dear, one cherishes their being, and ultimately one acts in the context of love in a non-exploitative manner, accepting and honouring other for who and how they are. As Ranahan (2000, p. 57) said, when discussing love in CYC practice, “a more mature form of love, can exist in practice when we choose to include it, even in a brief moment of our connectedness with a child”. An edition of the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care (2017) has also affirmed the importance, and role, of love in our field.

***Being in relationship*** is not the same as ‘having a relationship’. Everyone *has* relationships but ‘*being in relationship*’ means engaging with the other person in an intimate and profound manner which impacts both young person *and* helper (Gannon, 2008). A CYC practitioner recognizes that they engage in a relationship with a person where each has contributed to making that relationship what it is (Fewster, 1990), even when the young person may have first encountered the practitioner under the circumstances of someone else’s choosing (such as an involuntary residential placement). It also means engaging in relationships and being in these relationships with intention for whatever time is available.



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While being-in-relationship might well be a universal characteristic of relational CYC practice, *how* one engages in relationship and the meaning of such engagement will be influenced by the history, culture, identity, capabilities and other aspects of the participants to this co-creation of the in-between. Thus, when we make efforts to be-in-relationship with other we are constantly contextualizing our actions and understanding in terms of the attributes we each bring to this encounter. As we shall see when considering the characteristic of Meaning-Making, what counts as an inviting gesture to one person may be experienced quite differently by the other – constant reflection, therefore, permeates our attempts to work towards being-in-relationship with other(s).

Relationships are comprised of a history and that history continues to shape the relationship and our being in such relationships. Writing about UK social work practices with young people in care, Thomas came to similar conclusions about the importance children give to relationships including “the continuity of this relationship, reliability and availability, confidentiality, advocacy and doing things together” (2005, p. 189). As Fewster said, “Being in relationship means that we have what it takes to remain open and responsive in conditions where most mortals – and professionals – quickly distance themselves, become ‘objective’ and look for the external fix” (2004, p. 3). Being in relationship, then, means that you and I encounter and *be* with one another in the in-between between us (Garfat, 2008). Being in relationship requires that we are constantly reflecting on the intersectionalities of self and other(s).

***Being and participating with people in the everyday moments of their lives.*** Whether it is with a family in their home as they are doing dishes or playing soccer with a young person in the community park; attending a human rights rally with a person concerned about their community, or chatting with a homeless youth on the streets; whether it involves hanging out with a mother in jail, engaging an autistic student, or participating with a young person in a church activity – CYC practitioners involve themselves in all aspects of the daily life of the people with



whom they work (Fulcher & Ainsworth, 2006; Hilton, 2002; Smart, 2006). As Bristow (2017, p. 19) said, when talking about working with people with autism, being with people “as they live their lives can be as simple as checking in throughout the day, or it can involve a more thorough involvement in their lives”. Young people author their own narratives, their own stories that capture their experience of life (Gharabaghi & Stuart (2011) and the role of the CYC practitioner is to become a significant character in their stories wherever those stories unfold.

When a CYC educator, for example, encounters a student in the cafeteria, the CYC responds to the student from a CYC perspective. When a CYC practitioner on the street encounters a young person, that worker remembers to interact using the characteristics of a relational CYC approach. The worker attends, for example, to a young person’s relationships with the other inhabitants of their street life, their identity and the socio-cultural context that frames their identity. Central to a CYC approach is the idea that if people can change how they are (develop different or new ways of being and / or doing), in the minutia of their lives (Maier, 1979), then change will be more enduring, for their relationships are central to who they are and how they are in their world and the world of others. Being and participating with people as they live their life, where they live their lives, increases the potential for them to develop new ways of being in their everyday world. And we remember, always, that sometimes the necessary changes are not in how the young people are, but, rather, changes are needed in the world which surrounds them.

Partnering with young people to challenge the world as it is and as it impacts them in particular, is one core element of being with young people as they live their lives. For Indigenous young people, for example, living their lives means also living deeply embedded racism, many symptoms of exclusion and few opportunities to live the spirit of their cultures, their languages or their rituals. Practitioners recognize that in today’s world, enduring change requires enduring advocacy through committed partnership with young people, their families and their communities.



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***Hanging out*** means that some of the CYC practitioner's time is spent doing apparently simple, everyday (yet extremely important) things with people (Garfat, 1999). To an outsider, it may seem as though nothing is happening. A walk in the park or ritualistically sipping tea with a family; kicking stones with a young person; browsing through cyber-space, chatting in the corridor, wheeling someone along the street, or leaning on a street lamp chatting with a homeless young person – all may seem like 'doing nothing' when, in fact, these may be the most important of activities. During such moments and experiences of 'hanging out' one is investing in building relationships of trust, safety, connectedness, and professional intimacy. In this *hanging out* control and power are set aside by the CYC as much as possible; rather, it is more an encounter, simply, of people hanging out together hopefully in the context of the young person's life space. And this takes time – something often missed as finance controllers scan quickly through monthly and yearly accounts or supervisors review a 'shift report' of notable incidences. These are the very types of relationships which are necessary if the practitioner is to become a significant and influential person included in the life of others (House of Commons Select Committee, 2009; Redl, 1952).

***Hanging In*** means that the Child and Youth Care practitioner does not give up when 'times are tough', even if, as hooks (2000) pointed out, this may be the intuitive response. Rather, one hangs in and works things through, demonstrating commitment and caring for that child, young person or parents and family members (Gompf, 2003). The traumatized child or young person in a foster home who is struggling to follow expectations, the Indigenous youth struggling to re-connect with cultural traditions, the Syrian student who is struggling to grasp a North American custom, the parent from another country who struggles with learning to parent according to 'expectations and demands' of a new culture, the research subjects who find it difficult to appear for interviews, or the person with a 'disability' trying to be in the world with others unable to see beyond the 'disability' and, therefore, do not engage with the full person – for CYC Practitioners these



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are all signs of the need to hang in. Sometimes things are ‘tough’ for the young person, sometimes for the practitioner and sometimes for both but hanging in means not giving up.

It requires that one be patient and move at the other’s pace rather than the practitioner’s own pace (Fulcher, 2006b) or the expectation of the program or service model. As a practitioner, for example, reaches out to connect with someone who has a history and context which warns against immediate connection, the practitioner also needs to hang in and not become frustrated while exploring new or culturally different ways of making that connection.

Equally, when times seem ‘good’, the practitioner does not automatically assume that ‘all is well’. Steckley and Kendrick (2008) highlighted implications associated with ‘*holding on*’ while ‘*hanging in*’; signaling the importance trauma sensitive forms of physical restraint as extreme examples of this characteristic. One must recognize that when the times are good, set-backs may be just around the corner. After all, learning and change, indeed healing, take time effort, practice, and learning from feedback.

***Working in the now*** means that the Child and Youth Care practitioner remains focused on the ‘here and now’, on what is happening in this moment between the practitioner and the other person (Freeman, 2014; Phelan, 2009). This allows the practitioner the opportunity to enhance their ability to “recognize and respond to behaviors as they are occurring” (Freeman, 2014, p. 14). Such an orientation on the present arises from the assumption that ‘we are who we are, wherever we are’ and that we bring our whole selves to every interaction. At the same time, this orientation to the here and now does not negate our continuous awareness of structural and systemic contexts that may contribute to individuals or families engaging in behaviours as reasonable and necessary defense mechanisms against racism, generational trauma, marginalization, exclusion and oppression.

In the present, one carries with them the past as well as expectations about the future (Winfield, 2005). If a person can change their way of being with another or



other(s) in the present, so too can they generalize that way of being to other situations in their life. Past experiences can become even more important learning cues in the here and now. Similarly, expectations about the future or future consequences can also change through new lived experiences in daily life events as they happen.

**Counseling on the go.** Unlike in other forms of helping, a Child and Youth Care practitioner does not normally meet with someone for a counseling session at a scheduled time and place (although that occasionally does happen and can be valuable). The counseling which occurs between a CYC practitioner and the other(s) typically occurs through fragmented but connected interactions, trusting that the ability of the other and the skill of the CYC practitioner will continue to connect such moments together into a coherent process (Krueger, 1999). Some refer to this CYC characteristic as ‘life-space counseling’ (Redl & Wineman, 1952). Here we notice the important role in which each relationship history impacts on present and future prospects for facilitated learning. As Mann-Feder (2011) explains, these moments of connected interaction are often more powerful than traditional approaches to ‘talk therapy’ precisely because they happen in moments of movement and activity when motivation to learn and try new things is high and relevant

**Flexibility and individuality** refer to the fact that every person and family is unique. Each person brings to the relational encounter a history of previous life experiences which may include relationships of pain, a history of oppression, positive encounters with adults, feelings of worthiness or unworthiness, experiences of racism, and the list could go on forever. What is important is that the practitioner recognizes that all these previous experiences are an important part of the context of the encounter and are a part of what influences, self or other, the person in their present context. Even historic trauma, racism, or abuse accumulates and can impact the present moment for an individual or family. The



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effective CYC practitioner is aware of this dynamic and adjusts their approach respectfully.

All of one's interventions must be tailored to fit the person and/or family as the practitioner understands them (Michael, 2005) and has learned about, and from, them. This means that the CYC practitioner is flexible in their interactions with each person, recognizing that there is no one approach or intervention which fits for everyone, or applies in all situations. Just because the last time the practitioner intervened in a particular manner when engaging with a person from a culture different than the practitioner's, and that action was successful, does not mean that all people from that culture will respond in the same manner. All people, in their unique cultural context, are different and individual. Just because one young person liked a joke when they were in pain, this does not mean that another young person will respond likewise (Digney, 2007). As deFinney, Loiselle and Dean (2010, p. 72) said, we always must take account of "the intersecting effects of gender, race, sexuality, (dis)ability, and age formations, among others". Just as CYC practitioners are individuals, so it is for everyone with whom they work. Thus, CYC practitioners must be ever flexible, preparing to modify their approach and way of being as appropriate with each unique individual they encounter. From this flows the contemporary reflection that 'one size does not fit all' (Naidoo, 2005) and any intervention must be considered in the light of both individuals specific history and current identity. This identified way of being with others is a unique contribution which CYC practitioners bring in supporting children, youth and families in today's world.

## **Interpreting**

*Meaning making is the process through which each of us – worker or child – interprets everything else including, for example, what constitutes a strength of character. (Freeman, 2013).*



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**Meaning-Making** refers to the process a person goes through in making sense of their experiences (Garfat, 2004b; Steckley & Smart, 2005). An action occurs – one interprets it according to their own way of making sense of things – and then acts according to that perception. The other person in any interaction does exactly the same. Thus, two people may respond very differently to a simple gesture because of what it means to them. What is important is not ‘what one meant to say or do’ but how the practitioner’s words or actions are interpreted by the other person. Saying hello, for example, to one young person on the streets may be interpreted as a gesture of inclusion, while to another it may signal betrayal. A male offering to shake hands with a woman of one culture may be interpreted as a gesture of equality, while to a woman from another culture it may signal invasion and disrespect. Things mean what they mean to the individual. Most of us behave in a manner which suggests that ‘our way’ of seeing the world is ‘the right way’ of seeing the world, and this is just not true. The CYC practitioner must guard against this unfortunate human tendency.

The process of meaning-making is influenced by many factors and just as the practitioner must be concerned about what influences the young person’s process of meaning making, so must the practitioner reflect equally on their own. How, for example, might a white middle class Canadian male, be influenced in the process of making meaning by a history of privilege or upbringing in the cultural context of a white euro-centric family history which includes the colonial history of perceiving self as the savior or hero ‘protecting and saving’ others? As Brokenleg said: “Our worldviews are shaped by our cultural and family attachments. Each of us drags around our cultural tail, a thousand years long as well as our more personal family tale (1998, p. 139) and “the way we and others see the world and make meaning in part is determined by the rituals, traditions, views and beliefs of our culture and families” (Krueger, 2006). Meaning making is central and inherent in every interaction we have with another person.



**Examining Context** requires one to be conscious of how everything that occurs does so in a context unique to the helper, the other, the specific moment of interaction and the history of such interactions (Krueger & Stuart, 1999). Some elements of context may be the same such as national and regional policies, political environment, agency philosophy, regulations, or the physical environment. Even when elements of context are the same, however, how these are experienced may differ substantially, especially when elements such as racism, exclusion or marginalization are considered. Other elements of context (e.g., cultural traditions, trauma histories, personal experiences of being cared for, previous relationships with adults, developmental stage, specific capabilities) vary with the individual interactions between CYC practitioner and the other person (Fulcher, 2006a). The interaction, for example, between a university student and a CYC instructor is contextualized by the meaning of education to both participants, the power in the relationship between the two as well as the power dynamics perpetuated by the institution as a symbol of dominant classes, racial, gender and other hegemonies. The structures and expectations of the university, the philosophies about education and many more things impact on the moment of interaction. Thus, no two contexts can ever be the same and the CYC practitioner is constantly examining all these elements so as to understand and engage with the moment more fully. Relational practice which does not include an awareness of the specific context of the multi-layered, lived experiences of others is insufficient (Munroe, 2017) for effective CYC practice.

**A Needs-Based Focus** assumes that everything one does, is done for a purpose (Hill, 2001). That purpose is to meet personal or social needs, although one cannot assume that everyone is constantly aware of what need they are trying to meet. As CYC practitioners, the task is to help people identify their needs and to find more satisfying ways of meeting them. When one helps a person to find a different, more satisfying, way of meeting a need then the previous way of meeting the need (usually an undesirable behaviour) is no longer necessary (Maier, 1979). Thus, it



becomes easier for that person to let go of such behaviour. The young person who belongs to a gang may be meeting the need for belonging. A partner having an affair may be meeting the need to feel valued. A young runaway may be meeting a need for safety. The student who 'acts out' in class may be meeting a need to be noticed by others.

While there are many frameworks which purport to identify human needs, a needs-based focus addresses human needs with direct and clear language (e.g., a need to be noticed or cared for, a need to matter to someone, experience connection or safety). Existing models of basic needs inform rather than limit such application.

**Strengths-Based.** The Child and Youth Care practitioner is positioned to seek out the strengths of the other(s) in whatever context they are encountered. It is, in fact, a primary task of CYC practitioners (Freeman, 2013). The practitioner admires, for example, the resilience of street youths and their ability to survive in a dangerous world. The practitioner identifies strengths in families who think all is lost and appreciates and rejoices in a student's determination to master a difficult concept or the autistic child's efforts to communicate. This focus on strengths and resilience enables others to also experience themselves as competent and worthy (Brendtro & Larson, 2005). Quite often this may represent the beginnings of a new experience of self for many of the children and young people with whom CYC practitioners work. Gilligan (2009) claimed that resilience is about doing well in adversity. As CYC practitioners reframe their thinking towards a strengths-based orientation, not only do they support the resilience of the children and young people with whom they work, they are also empowered themselves.

**Developmentally Responsive Practice** means that the Child and Youth Care practitioner attends to the relevant developmental characteristics of each individual (Fulcher & Garfat, 2008; Maier, 1987). Rather than simply reacting to their behaviour, the practitioner responds to the person's needs in a manner which is



proactively consistent with their developmental stage and needs (Small & Fulcher, 2006). Here one considers development not from a chronological perspective but rather from a capacity perspective. This enables the practitioner to consider each person as an individual with strengths and challenges in different areas since nobody develops consistently across all areas of their potential. When thinking of families, the practitioner also considers their developmental stage and potential, recognizing that not all families develop according to some predetermined plan and that the concept of development commonly differs across cultures. In fact, quite differently than in traditional developmental psychology, the CYC developmental perspective is focused on confidence building around the demonstrated capacities of the young person or a family or even a community in order to aspire to further accomplishments. In this way, the CYC practitioner can operate from within a framework of neuro-diversity, and the many different ways in which developmental process is articulated and critiqued across traumatized, racialized and gendered communities.

***It's All about Us*** refers to the fact that, ultimately, interactions with other people are profoundly influenced by who CYC practitioners are themselves, As Burford and Fulcher noted there is “an important interplay between the diagnostic characteristics of residents and the patterns of staff team functioning found in any residential group care centre” (2006, p. 202-203). It is only through a deep and active self-awareness that the practitioner can be reassured that their actions are in the interest of the other(s) and not simply the CYC practitioner meeting their own needs, or that working over any length of time with particular young people may impact directly on a practitioner’s actual state of being (Mattingly, 2006). ‘It’s all about us’ also refers to the fact that one is not operating alone. The plural pronoun ‘us’ refers to everyone involved in helping another person grow and develop. This holds for all CYC practitioners, whether their titles be Foster Carer, Kinship Carer, Birth Family member, Young Person, Social Worker, Teacher, Therapist, Manager, Play Group or Youth Group leader, Peer Mentor, Distant Relatives, Clan



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or Tribal members, etc., Each has a role to play. The more everyone is working together, unified and not ‘us and them’, the more successful everyone will be in supporting developmental outcomes for the people with whom we work. Abraham (2009) refers to this as ‘Team Parenting’. Milligan and Stevens (2006) spoke about this as collaborative practice. It is thus argued that the CYC approach is holistic, ecological and inclusive. Ultimately, “We’re all in this together!”

**Family-Oriented.** There was a time when family was not considered to be an important part of the Child and Youth Care field. Indeed, CYC workers were often encouraged to think of family as ‘the enemy’ – the cause of the problems of the child or young person with whom they were working (Shaw & Garfat, 2004). Now CYC practitioners recognize that family is important (Ainsworth, 2006). Families – including extended family members, clan or tribe – are ever present. The student in the classroom carries the expectations of family and extended family members. The young person on the street carries ‘family’ – even if only the ideal family – in their head. Many youths also choose their family, selecting those who are meaningful to them. Families with whom CYC practitioners work are not only present but so, too, are the families and extended families of the parents. Families may exist or be imagined in local geographies (and therefore be physically accessible) or in distant and even transnational spaces, with many intersections of language, family rituals and traditions, and social values. Also present are the family and extended families of the CYC practitioner, whether working the floor, or engaging in supervision. The competent practitioner is ever mindful that there is no such thing, really, as helping in the absence of family and extended family members. This is because family – in whatever form or tradition – is always with us and also with each person the CYC practitioner encounters (Garfat & Charles, 2010) and that ‘family’ is best identified by whom the young person identifies as family, not by the traditional cultural norms.



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**Reflection** is the process one goes through when thinking about one's work: What have we done? What are we doing here? What might we do in the future? How is my history impacting on the current situation? How have traumatic experiences in the past impacted this current interaction? What biases am I holding, consciously or unconsciously, which may be of importance here? How is the power I hold (e.g., as a result of my professional position, privilege, economic means, gender identity, abilities) impacting the current circumstance and how is the power of the space I am in impacting me? The effective helper is a reflective helper, always contemplating whether there are better ways, or how one might do things differently (Winfield, 2005). As the practitioner intervenes in the moment, they are questioning why they are doing what they are doing. After the intervention is over, the practitioner reviews why they did what they did. In preparing for the next intervention, one might ask: 'Why am I thinking of doing this?' 'What is influencing me to think like this?' or 'How might my various actions be interpreted by the other person(s)?' This continuous process of reflection before, during, and after an action (Schon, 1983) helps the CYC practitioner to stay constantly focused, in an ongoing way, on acting in the best interests of the other(s).

## Doing

*"Professional involvement is about doing with intention."* (Ricks, 1992)

**Connection and Engagement** builds from the notion that if someone is not connected with another, and/or if one cannot engage with them in a significant and culturally meaningful manner, then the practitioner's interventions cannot be effective (Garfat & Charles, 2010). It is unacceptable to blame the 'other' when they are nonresponsive; it is the practitioner's obligation to work towards making the connection. All too often, a failure to connect or engage gets rendered as a diagnostic justification for 'what's wrong with the other person'. Relationship is the foundation of all CYC work and connection is the foundation of relationship



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(Brendtro & du Toit, 2005). The practitioner connects with the person, and then engages with them as they live their lives. Helping a young woman nurse her child, assisting parents to prepare the garden, teaching a young person to shoot a basketball, helping a new immigrant to navigate the health and welfare systems, combating oppressive practices, etc. – all such engagements are powerful when one is connected in relationship *with* another and sometimes with community.

**Rituals of Encounter** require that Child and Youth Care practitioners give conscious reflection to the ways in which they engage with another. This involves giving respectful attention to important protocols associated with engaging with someone from cultural traditions that are different from one's own (Fulcher, 2003). It also means paying attention to one's own positionality, particularly when practitioner and young person represent different races, faith groups, gender identities, etc. Simply trying to understand, as well as contemplate different relational starting points can present major challenges. One's own personal experiences of acculturation and socialisation impose taken-for-granted assumptions and a cognitive mindset that is not easily altered. Rituals of encounter between practitioner(s) and children or young people have developed through cultural protocols. The meaning a young person gives to culture – including youth group or gang culture – is constantly evolving as they seek to understand and adapt to their current situation and any new living environment or experiences. Each encounter requires that a cultural lens be included in a CYC practitioner's basic competencies. Like transitional objects, rituals of encounter strengthen purposeful communication. And for each person, from each culture, it is unique.

Ritual is important to identity formation and to our existence as social beings. From daily routines to the ways we meet and greet each other, rituals place us with one another, bringing us together by framing shared experiences; helping us to recognize self in each other. Rituals can also be a way of showing *resistance to injustice*, a way of contesting power through a public celebration of common purpose (Snell, 2017)



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**Intentionality** means that everything a Child and Youth Care practitioner does is done with a purpose (Molepo, 2005). There are few ‘random’ actions or interventions. It means thinking consciously about *what is required for the other to be comfortable* with intentional attempts at making connections. All the practitioner’s interventions are planned and fit with the regularly reviewed goals established with the young person and/or their families. When a community-based CYC practitioner meets with a family in their home, it is important to decide how each individual will be greeted on arrival, who will be greeted first and how one will be with them. All of these decisions, as a reflective practitioner, take into consideration the similarities and differences between the practitioner and other – culture, race, identity, place in the world, etc. A CYC practitioner facilitating a training program, for example, needs to decide how the group will be greeted, how individuals might be singled out for attention, how the practitioner needs to open themselves to the differences between themselves, as the trainer, and the identities of the participants. No matter where CYC practitioners work, what they do is always intentional and contextually considered. This does not mean that one abandons spontaneity. But even in the moment of spontaneity, the practitioner continues to reflect on their intention(s) in the moment. As Ricks, 1992, p. 56) said, “the intentional involvement in intervention requires that the worker be thoughtful and have clarity of purpose in determining “what to do before doing it”. This is the core of reflective practice.

**Meeting Them Where They Are At.** Meeting people ‘where they are at’ (Krueger, 2000) involves being with people where they live their lives but also more than that. It means accepting people for *how they are* and who they are as we encounter them in their lives. They may be ‘different’ from us and we must honour and adapt to that difference. It means responding appropriately to their developmental capabilities, accepting their fears and hesitations, celebrating their joys and enabling them – without pressure – to be who they are in interactions with others (Small & Fulcher, 2006). It also means that we must be open to their



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suspicions of us, their perceptions of how we are different, and their hesitations to engage or be engaged. Young people and families from traumatized, racialized or transgender communities have good reason to be weary of anyone presenting themselves as ‘helpers’. This is important (and perhaps even more so) when the ‘differences between us’ make us afraid or uncomfortable. As Krueger said, we must be “geared to their emotional, cognitive, social, and physical needs” (2000, n.p.). Just as a forest guide must meet others at the beginning of their journey, so does the CYC practitioner meet the other “where they are at” as they begin the journey and then move on together from there. Meeting people where they are at also requires that the practitioner be aware of the circumstances that brought them there.

**Purposeful Use of Activities.** Phelan (2017) has argued that one of the essential tasks of Child and Youth Care practitioners is to arrange experiences for people. The practitioner arranges “experiences that promote the possibility of new beliefs for the people we support” (Phelan, 2009, n.p.). The practitioner attempts to facilitate learning opportunities in the everyday. Such learning opportunities and the purposeful use of activities enable children and young people to experience safer places where new experiences can happen, and important learning can be nurtured. One learns about and takes into consideration a person’s previous experiences in anticipation of how new experiences might offer the potential for growth (Phelan, 2009, n.p.). For example, someone who has never experienced being cared for may experience this through a learning opportunity and planned experience arranged – even engineered – by the CYC Practitioner. As Karen VanderVen (2003) has said, the purposeful making of a water bomb with a balloon or making a meal together can change a life.

**Doing ‘With’, not ‘For’ or ‘To’** refers to how CYC practitioners engage with people, helping them to learn and develop through doing things *with* them. In this way we do not deny them the prospect of learning and growing through doing



everything for them, especially when they are capable of doing it themselves (Delano & Shaw, 2011). Nor does one stand back and do things to them (such as ordering them about). Ultimately one remains engaged 'with' people through the process of their own growth and development, walking alongside them as a guide, acknowledging their similarities and differences. This process of 'doing with' requires the practitioner's ongoing commitment to the co-created space between practitioner and other, monitoring the changing characteristics and experience of that co-created space (Phelan, 2009). Whether it is in supervision, with a family in a rural garden, or engaging in any other activity – the constant focus is on being and doing *with* the other. As Al Triesman suggested in 1982 (n.p.), "When we do things to youth and not *with* them, it is not going to work so well".

The foregoing is not meant to imply that there are never times when we do things to, or for, young people and others. There are times and situations when a young person, for example, may not have the physical ability or capacity to do everything with the CYC practitioner. In these situations, the practitioner may indeed do some things 'for' the young person, while still being engaged *with* the young person, but only to the point where the young person is once again able to engage *with* the practitioner (dressing oneself comes to mind as an example). There are also times when it may be appropriate to do 'to' the young person – for example in situations of imminent and serious harm to self or others. However, always the goal is to return to a state of 'doing with' as soon as possible.

*Doing with* implies that we are engaged with them, even if we are doing something for them, which means that our doing for them is done in an agreed engagement. Indeed, if we have been engaged in doing *with* them, before the need to 'do to' arises, then *our doing to is in the context of doing with* and likely makes the process easier.

Independence – or perhaps better stated as inter-dependence – is a goal for many young people who want to live on their own. Doing with, for, or to is inherently tied to assessing and responding to developmental process and growth and individualized in each interaction of caring.



**Rhythmicity** refers to the shared experience of engaging in a synchronized, dynamic connection with another (Krueger, 1994; Maier, 1992). Rhythms of coming and going, rhythmic rituals of acknowledgement, patterns of play amongst children, simple repeated gestures of greeting at the door of the family home, special handshakes on the street, or with a teacher on entering the classroom – all are examples of the rhythms in which one might engage and experience with people. Connecting in rhythm with people helps to nurture and strengthen connections and a sense of ‘being with’ that person. We pay particular attention to the rhythms that acknowledge the ways of being and doing of young people, their families and communities, especially when working across racial, gender or other identities. While working, regardless of location, a child and youth care approach invites one to pay particular attention to the rhythms of that person’s, or that family’s life, thereby strengthening opportunities to enter into rhythms of connectedness and caring with them.

**Being Emotionally Present.** Mark Krueger was perhaps the greatest advocate in the CYC field for ‘being present’ (Krueger, 1999). Whether with children, young people or adults and families – being present remains a central feature of how CYC practitioners work. While difficult to describe, being present is an experience most will have had with another and in relations with other(s). Intentional presence is a core element of relational practice; the space in-between us cannot emerge, much less be recognized, unless we are present. At the same time, presence is not contingent on the practitioner’s physical presence; we can be present virtually in the emotions, the imagination, or the mental constructions of the young person. No matter how we are present, it This involves allowing one’s Self to be in the moment with the other or others (Fewster, 1990). At some level, of course, one is always ‘present’.

But ‘being present’ in the relational sense involves the Child and Youth Care practitioner making a conscious effort to make her or his ‘Self’ available and self-evident in the moment, focusing with immediacy on the other(s). When I am with



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you, I am with you and not somewhere else! My thoughts and affections are connected in being with you in this moment. When I am unable to be physically with you, I leave in your presence a symbol of me, which could be what Henry Maier (1981) had termed ‘a transitional object’. Ricks (2003) has argued that one of the most important aspects of relational practice is for the practitioner to be present with the other while simultaneously being present with self. She called this active self-awareness. As Ranahan (2017, p. 4) noted “when present – or presencing – child and youth care workers are fully implicated in the process in moments of naming and making visible silenced experiences”.

***Using Daily Life Events to Facilitate Change.*** Relational Child and Youth Care practice involves using the everyday, seemingly simple, moments which occur as CYC practitioners live and work with people to help them find different ways of being and living in the world (Maier, 1987). These moments – as they are occurring – provide the most powerful and relevant opportunities for change. Whether it be an opportunity-led event (Ward, 1998) with a child in a residential program or foster home, a life altering moment in working with a family (Jones 2007; Shaw & Garfat, 2004), a brief encounter with youths on the street (Apetkar, 2001), or a simple exchange in a rural college classroom (Shaw, 2011) – the moment, and its potential for powerful change, is seen as central to a CYC approach. Child and Youth Care practitioners are defined in their work by the way they make use of these moments.

## **Conclusion**

The field of Child and Youth Care has expanded beyond its origins in residential child care to encompass youth work and a wide range of practices within child and youth services. Child and Youth Care practitioners are found everywhere – from the most isolated rural Isibindi projects in South Africa, to the halls of college and university academia. Practitioners can be located using a CYC approach from the streets of large urban cities to isolation wards in children’s hospitals; and from the





tundra of northern Canada to the mountains of Bulgaria or Borneo. It is a worldwide practice – especially across the English-speaking world that parallels the European tradition of Social Pedagogy.

Child and Youth Care practitioners can also be found working in non-English-speaking places where political and economic histories may have introduced English patterns of health and social services administration. This includes places that are looking to ‘English-speaking countries’ for examples (for better or worse) of best practice in the delivery of health and welfare services for children, young people and their families. The activities of international non-governmental organizations have also contributed to the extension of Child and Youth Care approaches through recruitment of health and welfare personnel to provide care for children, young people and families in the so-called global South.

Experience in the field shows that a Child and Youth Care approach may find ready applications in direct care work with people of all ages across the life span of development, and in all settings (see VanderVen, 1992). As noted from the beginning, a Child and Youth Care approach represents a way of being and working in the world. Fundamentally, it is, about how one does what these practitioners do, not a question of what the practitioner is called or where they are located. It is this type of relational approach which gives us hope and the opportunity to be among the most influential of healers and caring individuals in a child or family’s life.

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