

**The Baobab Centre**  
Inspiring potential and growth



## September Newsletter 2008

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## Politics, power and ponderings

*This article was written in March 2008 as a challenge to counsellors and psychotherapists to be more reflective in their work, particularly in view of the current climate of debate about the state regulation of counselling and psychotherapy. It is as relevant to anyone who finds themselves in a position of power and is offered here, as it serves as an example of reflective practice which is a skill we will be encouraging in managers through our Masterclasses in Self Reflective Management.*

Will you stay beside me while I pull the threads of my thoughts and my heart's cry together? Will you wait with me while I look over events of the last few days of my life and weave a tapestry of understanding, while I worry at the thoughts and feelings inside me? Will you be able to do so even if I don't know how long it will take, or what it will look like in the end or even whether it will be of any use? Will you take time with me and wonder?

Do you remember when you were young or inexperienced, or both – when you thought you could, or maybe even would, change the world, or at least some small part of it? When you thought those with the power and the authority, misunderstood and mismanaged? When you thought those others who were in charge, or where the professionals, missed the point? When you felt so small in the face of a system's greatness? Was there a time when you thought – “When I have the power I will do it differently”? It is a human condition, it seems.

I recently watched a Panorama programme “No more Mandelas”, presented by Fergal Keane. I watched Rev. Frank Chikane, previous activist and pacifist in South Africa, a respected champion of the people in the apartheid era, who had worked closely with Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the dignity of his people against oppression and discrimination. I listened as the same man now defended and excused the abuses of power by his boss, the president Thabo Mbeki. The programme interviewed the incoming president of the African National Congress (ANC), Jacob Zuma, a man facing charges of corruption, racketeering and tax evasion. Desmond Tutu said of Zuma that

he is “someone of whom most of us would be ashamed”; Zuma brushed aside the deep concerns held by many around his actions and those of his associates, which include those convicted of corruption, as though they were irritating but insignificant flies. How had these changes come about? How had these men lost their way, seemingly abandoning their previously strongly held values and beliefs?

In the same programme, Job Sikhala, Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe, pondered on the plundering of his country. He described the system under Robert Mugabe, where abuse of power is rife and where some of his countrymen are given much and some so very little. He accused Mbeki of failing to play “his moral role” as an established African leader and not speaking out against Mugabe's “black apartheid government” in Zimbabwe. I felt a deep sadness that yet another country in the land of my birth, vibrant Africa, was being torn and beaten by the few individuals who abuse the power they hold.

On a slightly different note, I have just finished reading “A million little pieces” by James Frey. It's the story of one young boy's pain and low self esteem which leads him to descend into years of addiction. It's the story of one man's fight to conquer his addictions. It's about triumph through personal responsibility, self understanding and love. It's about the gaining of personal power against all the odds and against the insistence of a rehabilitation system which declares that it knows best.

What does either of these things have to do with me? Well, I saw the programme, read the book and was moved by them both. But what do they have to do with you? I believe these stories have something to do with all of us because they are stories of power,

of status, of authority, of position and of money.

Are we not similar in some ways to the African politicians mentioned above? Did we and our profession not start out wanting to bring a brave new world to our society? Did we not set out to free ourselves and others from the constraints of a medical model? A world where emotional struggles were acknowledged and honoured? Did we not set out to accompany, support and challenge while an individual worked painfully through their issues of hurt, anger and a myriad other emotions? Was it not our purpose and goal to empower another by facilitating them through their own very personal journey, no matter where or how long? I wonder then if we still hold these things dear enough. Or do we, like Chikane, Mbeki, Zuma and the clinic in James Frey's book, once we have gained the recognition, the professional status and the power, do everything we can to hold that power and to increase it for our own good.

Am I or are you a tyrant in the client's country? Do I, do we, impose our beliefs and systems without due regard or appropriate consultation? Do we put them above the needs of our clients? Are we working for the people, or the power?

Do we stay reflective enough to catch ourselves changing as we move from a place of no power to power? Are we aware of the subtle changes this brings to our thoughts, feelings and behaviours? Can we stay true to the values of our disenfranchised youth when we find ourselves in authority and holding the power? Or do we alter slowly, insidiously, so that we can hold on to the power at all cost?

Do we consider our clients enough in this new world where money speaks? Money for counsellors' jobs, for teaching posts, for research projects, for writing books? Has our lust for professional standing and the power that brings eroded our values?

I wonder if we should take a leaf from James Frey's book. He knew he could not fight a system, could not convince the authorities in the rehabilitation clinic that their method of staying sober was not right for him. They believed in a formula, a system, an evidenced based approach. He knew it would not work for him. Against

the odds he held to his own standard, to what he knew would work for him. He worked until he could look into his own eyes in a mirror. I cannot change the direction of psychotherapy and counselling in this country today. I cannot stop what I believe is the injustice of therapists and organisations turning away from those they set out to support in favour of the paymasters and paymistresses. But I can challenge you, as I challenge myself, to look in the mirror at the end of a day of working with clients and ask, "have I worked in a way that has empowered my client?" Can we look deep into your own eyes and be satisfied? Or do we need to look away?

And what of you and I? Did you consider skipping this article written by some unknown woman with no book, no university post and no published research to her name? Could you stay with me through my meanderings, my wanderings? Or did you find yourself tapping your foot, wanting to know where all of this was going? Did you hunger for references, research evidence, and solution focused models? Or could you stand by me while I told you of my pain? Could you reflect on what any of this means for you, or far more importantly, your clients?

Gayle-Anne Drury  
March 2008

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Author's note:

I am aware that parts of James Frey's account have been discredited and he has been accused and has owned to the fact that he fabricated parts of his story. It is a shame that he cannot look himself in the eyes about his own book, but the point remains that in therapy, as in many other professions, there is a danger present when professionals "know best" and refuse to listen to the experiences and knowledge of others.

### References

Frey, J. (2003). *A million little pieces*. London: John Murray Publisher.

*Panorama* – No More Mandelas, Fergal Keane. Broadcast on BBC 1 at 20.30 on 11 February, 2008.

## The Baobab Centre introduces Myers-Briggs to its repertoire

Plato suggested man was born with knowledge. Aristotle argued knowledge comes from experience.

These two opposing views were prevalent in the third and fourth centuries B.C. in ancient Greece. Plato was the teacher, Aristotle his student. Both were philosophers who felt strongly enough about their views to set up their own schools to pass on their knowledge and their theories.

More than two thousand years later, two psychiatrists found themselves in a very similar position to Plato and Aristotle. Carl Jung, a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, was introduced to the idea of repression into the unconscious mind and dreams by his elder, Sigmund Freud, an Austrian physician and psychiatrist practising in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Like Aristotle, Jung grew to hold opposing views to his senior. Freud, along the lines of Aristotle, believed our mental structures are derived from the experiences we have once we are born. Jung, on the other hand, in much the same way as Plato, believed in a 'collective unconscious'\*. He believed we are born with an innate structural predisposition, schemata or 'archetype', in other words we are born with a personality which fits within a framework in common with others and there are several pre-set frameworks in the human populace and the world at large.

What have these philosophers and psychiatrists got to do with The Baobab Centre and Myers-Briggs? The Baobab Centre team has always worked with individuals, teams and organisations on understanding the behaviours stemming from previous experiences (nurture – Aristotle and Freud), as well as providing an insight into our innate structural disposition (nature – Plato and Jung). The addition of a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) provides a further tool to help us understand our nature, our preferred options and our nurture, our learned options. Of course, we are the

result of both our genetic make-up and our experiences and it is important to look at both nature and nurture. The Baobab Centre believes strongly in working with the whole being, whether that is an individual, team or organisation, and, therefore, tools such as the MBTI will only be used by its practitioners within the wider context.

The MBTI is most beneficial to individuals or teams who have already worked through rifts and difficulties or who do not have any deep issues to address. It is valuable to those who wish to make progress from an already strong foundation and to build upon their strengths. The Baobab Centre team sees this tool being used as part of a much wider range of services dealing with issues of relational management. The team believes there is a danger in looking only at our innate preferences and discounting behaviours which are a direct result of our experiences. Jung himself, on whose theories the MBTI is based, wrote about having two personalities, his true self and the person he had to be in order to survive in the world around him. In relational management we cannot discount either our behaviours or our experiences.

The MBTI is an assessment exercise which is based upon Jung's theory that we have an innate personality which is our true self. The Indicator was devised by Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Myers and was first published for use in 1956 after 20 years of research. Briggs and Myers felt that finding out about our personality type is a valuable way for us to understand our preferred way of being in the world. They found Jung's work fascinating, albeit not very accessible to non-psychologists such as themselves. They, therefore, developed the MBTI as an accessible, reliable way for individuals to find out about their personality type. This assessment tool has stood the test of time and has been tested and retested for validity and reliability for the past half century and has been the subject of over 4,000 research

papers which provide further support for its reliability and validity.

The MBTI can be accessed through The Baobab Centre in one of three ways. The Baobab Centre practitioner could recommend to an existing client that they would benefit from the MBTI; an existing client could request the MBTI; a new client could make a direct request for the MBTI. The same three routes are available for teams.

It is important to note that the MBTI is about our preferences and strengths, not our abilities or character. This has not always been understood and, as a result, there has been a misconception that it can be used for recruiting or promoting individuals; however, it must be stressed that what we prefer and what we can do well are two quite different things. The MBTI, therefore, cannot be used by managers or organisations for recruitment or promotion. It is, however, a valuable tool in helping us understand why we prefer and are comfortable in certain situations more than others and thus can assist us in our career choices, in our interaction with other people and in our understanding of our leadership and management styles.

The MBTI assessment and feedback takes between 2 to 4 hours. It is possible for an individual to complete the assessment tool in their own time; however, the scoring must be carried out by a qualified practitioner and the results must be given as part of face-to-face feedback. The results are confidential to the individual and can only be provided to a third party by the individual. In working with teams, the individuals in the team must have their individual feedbacks first and the team members must agree to share their personality type with the others. At The Baobab Centre, Manar Matusiak is the qualified MBTI practitioner, although, as with all referrals, the first point of contact is Gayle-Anne Drury. If you are an individual or you are part of a team interested in the MBTI, please contact Gayle-Anne on 01904 422733 or at [gadrury@baobabcentre.com](mailto:gadrury@baobabcentre.com).

### References

\*Carvalho, R. (1990). Psychodynamic therapy: the Jungian approach in Dryden W (Ed.). *Individual Therapy. A Handbook*. Bucks: Open University Press.

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## Parenting skills workshop feedback

The parenting skills workshop took place on **Friday 20th June 2008**. One of the delegates has very kindly written about their experience.

"Well what did I think? Before getting there I was very unsure what to think or what we would be doing. Right from the start both Gayle-Anne and Nic made you feel very welcome and comfortable. I have to say after meeting the rest of the group of people I felt fine about being with them. It was about the right amount to be there - not too big.

The day was very well organised and I still felt afterwards I could have done with more time to explore more, I was just coming to understand where it was coming from and

learning things about myself when it had to finish.

Sitting with Nic and discussing the day after the teaching had finished was, for me, great. Listening to her and having that one on one conversation made a lot more sense of the day and of, how and who, I was to me."

## When 'book' is the new 'cool' and punctuation takes on a new meaning

How important is punctuation in this day and age of texting and emailing? Would you consider yourself to be at the forefront of the English language of today?

Try this little exercise and decide for yourself how important punctuation is and then read on to find out how good a handle you have on present-day language.

### Exercise

Taken from *Body Language* by G. Ribbens and G. Whitear, 2007.

Read the paragraph below and add punctuation to denote your understanding of the meaning. Check the answer on the back page.

Dear John I want a man who knows what love is all about you are generous kind thoughtful people who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior you have ruined me for other men I yearn for you I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart I can be forever happy will you let me be yours Gloria.

### Punctuation, meaning and emotions

How do we convey our feelings in texts and emails, the sole purpose of which are speed and conciseness?

Colons, semi-colons and parenthesis have taken on a completely new meaning. :- ) denotes a smile, so your message is meant positively. :- ( denotes a sad face, so that negative emotion is passed on in your written message. And for a bit of complicity there is ; - ) the wink! It was recently explained to me by my son that if you turn these bits of punctuation round by 90 degrees clockwise you can see the expression on the face, so in the case of the happy face, two eyes, a nose and a smiley mouth and so on. These symbols taken from punctuation marks and previously established symbols once known as 'smileys', have combined and evolved into emoticons, there for you to add abbreviated emotion to your text or email!

Language and punctuation are moving forward at an incredible pace. This is partly because the younger generation are driving this and have created a language between themselves that could exclude adults (POS – parents over shoulder!). They

use punctuation differently in their texts and emails and they also have their own acronyms and new meanings for existing words.

It is wonderful to know that our language is evolving and is not stuck in a timewarp – would people 50 years ago have known what you were talking about if you had used words like 'email' and 'timewarp'? Wonderful though it is, however, I find myself asking "where does that leave traditionalists like me?" The reality is that we have to adapt and yet it is not time to give up all things traditional.

Some conventional uses of punctuation are still crucial to meaning. According to Albert Mehrabian, who carried out research on body language in the 1950s and is currently Professor Emeritus of UCLA (University College Los Angeles), the tone of your voice conveys approximately 38% of meaning. Punctuation provides tone to the written word. Take a simple word such as the name – Jack. By using different punctuation, you can alter the meaning behind the word completely, for example: - "Jack?", "Jack!" or simply "Jack".

The importance of punctuation is such that Lynn Truss in 2007 wrote a bestseller entitled "Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation". There has to be a middle ground, though, and I suspect the use of punctuation to denote tone and emotion will increase and punctuation which only provides unnecessary nuances will decrease. In other words, we might lose commas to convey a clause, a dependent clause, an independent clause or an adverb clause. Similarly, we might lose semi-colons to split up two thoughts in one sentence. However, where punctuation changes the meaning or is used as an indication of emotion, there is most likely to be an increase and a change of use :- )

And where does that leave the dreaded apostrophe? It can completely alter the meaning of words. Look at the following: 'the managers meeting' or 'the funders money'. Do we mean the meeting of one manager (manager's) or the meeting of several managers (managers')? Do we mean the money of one funder (funder's) or the money of several funders (funders')? Where we put the apostrophe makes all the difference to the meaning.

### **Text speak and our changing language**

As if it isn't enough that the use of punctuation is changing, we also now have to contend with the new meaning of words thanks to the onset of texting. I recently heard that 'book' is the new 'cool', since that is the first word which comes up in predictive text when you type in 'cool'. Also, B-) means 'cool', as the 'B' looks like designer sunglasses which are still considered cool! I was feeling quite proud of myself that I already knew that gr8 means 'great', but now we also have BBT, BFN, CID, GTG, IOH and ROFL to name but a few acronyms ('be back tomorrow', 'bye for now', 'consider it done', 'got to go', 'I'm outta here', and 'rolling on the floor laughing'). To confuse things further, KISS no longer means puckering up, but 'keep it simple stupid'.

It is not alright to think that we can bury our heads in the sand and continue as before – "After all", we can say to ourselves, "this is the language of a young generation and cannot leak into our world of work". Unfortunately for us traditionalists, that is not the case. A friend who works in the law courts recently told me they had a statement in which was written "no1". They deliberated over who Number One was. They eventually established that the writer meant 'no-one'. Text speak is definitely filtering through to mainstream work and education. After all, in 2006 the Scottish Qualifications Authority agreed to allow "2b r nt 2b" as long as candidates showed they understood the subject.\*

If we would like to continue communicating fluently in writing, we need to learn the new language. We also need to learn how

to convey feelings and emotions more clearly in written communication so that misunderstandings are kept to a minimum. We need to be more aware than ever of punctuation and how it is used and we also need to start understanding the language of the young people of today - text speak.

TM communic8 4 TOM!

(Trust me, communicate for tomorrow).

\*<http://www.24dash.com/news/Education/2006-11-01-Politicians-condemn-exam-chiefs-for-accepting-text-speak>

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- Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent Messages*. California, US: Belmont.
- Ribbens, G., & Whitear, G. (2007). *Body Language*. London, UK. The Chartered Management Institute.
- Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. London, UK: Profile Books Ltd.
- 24dash.com. (2008). *Politicians condemn exam chiefs for accepting 'text speak'*. Retrieved 14 February 2008 from <http://www.24dash.com/news/Education/2006-11-01-Politicians-condemn-exam-chiefs-for-accepting-text-speak>.

### **Further Reading on Text Speak**

*Acronyms and Text messaging for parents*  
<http://www.tiscali.co.uk/community/textspeak.html> - accessed 12 February 2008.

*Text speak: U 2 can communic8*  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/connected/main.jhtml?xml=/connected/2007/08/18/dltext118.xml> - accessed 12 February 2008.

Answer to exercise on the back page.

Manar Matusiak

**Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned**  
**Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), 563-483 BC**

### **And this month's P.S. from Nic...**

Try to resist reading the upside down text below until you have had a go at the exercise on page 6, it may surprise you!

We've put together another bumper issue for this autumn. We hope you managed to get some rest over the summer. We are now working hard to put our programme of workshops together for next year as well as the next residential courses.

In addition to the list of workshops that you will find in our trifold flyer, in the last issue of the newsletter and on our website [www.baobabcentre.com](http://www.baobabcentre.com), we are also offering 'Transferring parenting skills into management and business', 'Critical thinking' workshops, and a residential weekend in the countryside to be centred around the theme of 'Explore your self and surroundings'.

As ever we keep listening to what you think would be helpful and interesting. If there is something in this newsletter you would like to know more about, or indeed, if there is something you would like us to offer, call us, we are always delighted to hear from you. Also, if any of the articles have caused you to think or feel differently we would love to hear about it.

Our thanks go to all the people who have worked with us in 2008 so far, either attending workshops and being willing to get stuck in, helping us to develop our support and indeed all those with whom we have valued relationship.

*Nic*

Nic Neath

Answer to the exercise on page 6.

There are two ways of punctuating the 'Dear John' letter which provide completely different meanings. Which one did you go for?

Dear John,

I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy. Will you let me be yours?

Gloria

Dear John,

I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be yours?

Yours, Gloria