



The Living Art/The Art of Living Project

The Nurturing of Mental Health

Course for project participants, staff and volunteers.

June 2022

By Brian De Lord

Director of Double Helix Resources



Module 1

- Long term thinking
- Physical & Emotional Balance

Long Term Thinking

- Independence, curiosity, and resilience are key to long-term thinking.
- We have to be willing to do hard, laborious, ungratifying things today — the kind of things that make little sense in the short term — so we can enjoy exponential results in the future.
- Big goals often are impossible in the short term. But with small, methodical steps, almost anything is attainable.

<https://bigthink.com/smart-skills/long-term-thinking/>

- <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/longplayer/>
- <https://longplayer.org/about>

Balance: Physical & Emotional

- George Locker (Tai Chi Practitioner) suggests balance is:
- “the rapid and automatic response by your postural muscles to the sensation of imbalance”.
- Or, thinking of balance as something you build, and then something you have – not something you do.
- Whatever your definition, a lack of balance is, globally, associated with serious health problems.
- **If physical balance is this important, what about emotional balance?**
- Is our task to help people (& ourselves) how to become better balanced?

Quotes

- “Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance, order, rhythm and harmony” Thomas Merton, Monk and Theologian
- “Balance is not something you find, it is something you create” Jana Kingsford, Author
- “Happiness is a skill, emotional balance is a skill, compassion and altruism are skills, and like any skill they need to be developed. That is what education is about.” Matthieu Ricard, writer, photographer, translator and Buddhist monk

Questions on Module 1

Tick the answer you think is correct:

- Long term thinking depends on:
 - a. Doing things quickly
 - b. Discipline, knowledge, Memory
 - c. Independence, resilience, creativity
- Balance is important because:
 - a. It is an indicator of good health
 - b. It is a natural skill
 - c. It can't be developed.

Module 2

The Double Helix:

- The story of your life
- Animation
- Double-Helix Exercise

The Double Helix The story of your life

- This exercise was designed to address the problem of traumatised young people suffering from forms of dissociative amnesia (DA).
- These involve disruptions of memory, awareness, identity, and perception. When one or more of these is disrupted, it traps children in an unhappy present. Because, “being able to remember past events and planning for the future go hand in hand”, (T. Zentall, U. of Wisconsin, 2007), “their visualisations of future events will be disorganised and emotionless” (E. Maguire, Wellcome Trust Centre, 2007).
- “Our awareness of self, time and distance is developed within the context of early awareness and reliability which becomes the foundation of future understanding of knowledge.” (H. Geddes, Therapeutic Care Journal. 2016).
- Aspiration, without reconciling the past seems impossible.

Double Helix Animation

- Watch this short Animation about how the Double Helix can be used:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1myQsfI9Idx10b3I8J0DqNXUaIwkY4NkC/view?pli=1>

The Double Helix Exercise

- Do an individual Double Helix about your time at Berrymede Junior School (Substitute any other organisation or group as needed):
 - 5 events and corresponding stories. (Intrapersonal)
 - Share with a small group (Interpersonal)
 - Share as an organisation/large group
 - At each stage reflect on your stories, noticing any themes, connections, realisations.
 -
- This will become your Collective memory of your time at BJS
- In what ways has your perception of yourself and your organisation changed/been added to?
- Reflect and add to this exercise as we go through the day and beyond.
-

Questions:

- The Double Helix is useful:
 - a. Because it is entertaining
 - b. Because being able to remember past events and planning for the future go hand in hand
 - c. Because it distracts us from any difficult experience
- The DH is useful because:
 - a. It allows us to explore our memories intra & inter-personally
 - b. It confirms our memories
 - c. It forms a good basis for a long discussion

Module 3

- Who is responsible for our mental health?

Who is responsible for our mental health?

- **Who is responsible for our mental health?**
 - Individual, family, friends, communities, institutions
- **Who could be responsible for our mental health?**
 - Individuals, families etc, but also social & political environments.
- **We seem to give the responsibility for mental health difficulties to the individual. They have the problem. Is it possible that their behaviour is a perfectly rational (if unhelpful!) response to the situation that they find themselves in?**

Who is responsible for our mental health?

- A great deal of the focus for supporting mental health difficulties fall on the individual & small groups. This has led to a wealth of approaches, systems & resources being developed in attempts to deal with an escalating problem.
- How could we build village environments where the majority of people can be supported in maintaining their mental health?
- “Do not blame people and their attitudes: the problem is not corruption or greed, the problem is the system that pushes you to be corrupt. Slavoj Zizek, Philosopher

Who is responsible for our mental health?

•Quote:

- “Will six sessions of CBT designed to target “unhelpful” thinking styles, really be effective for someone who doesn’t know how they’re going to feed their family for another week? Antidepressants aren’t going to eradicate the relentless racial trauma a black man is surviving in a hostile workplace, and branding people who are enduring sexual violence with a psychiatric disorder (in a world where two women a week are murdered in their own home) does nothing to keep them safe. Unsurprisingly, mindfulness isn’t helping children who are navigating poverty, peer pressure and competitive exam-driven school conditions, where bullying and social media harm are rife.”
- Sarah Ahsan, Clinical Psychologist, Poet, Writer & Educator

What about the impact of other wider problems:

- The Pandemic,
- Climate Change
- Wars
- Cost of Living
- Employment and development
-
- **Is the individual expectation of safety possible?**
-
- **Is distress a rational response to a distressing environment?**

•

Questions

- Mental health is the responsibility of:
 - a. The individual
 - b. The family
 - c. Social & political issues
 - d. All of the above
- Traditional therapeutic responses are limited in their effectiveness:
 - a. Because individuals are not skilled enough
 - b. The needs to be a systemic response to the problems of communities
 - c. They are too expensive

Do we need a framework for understanding?

- <https://www.thersa.org/video/animates/rsa-minimate/2021/a-frame-work-for-change-matthew-taylor>

- How could you use this framework in your work?

The Power Threat Meaning Framework

- The Framework summarises and integrates a great deal of evidence about the role of various kinds of power in people's lives; the kinds of threat that misuses of power pose to us; and the ways we have learned as human beings to respond to threat. In traditional mental health practice, these threat responses are sometimes called 'symptoms'.
- The Framework also looks at how we make sense of these difficult experiences, and how messages from wider society can increase our feelings of shame, self-blame, isolation, fear and guilt. The main aspects of the Framework are summarised in these questions, which can apply to individuals, families or social groups:

The Power Threat Meaning Framework

- ‘What has happened to you?’ (How is Power operating in your life?)
- ‘How did it affect you?’ (What kind of Threats does this pose?)
- ‘What sense did you make of it?’ (What is the Meaning of these situations and experiences to you?)
- ‘What did you have to do to survive?’ (What kinds of Threat Response are you using?)
- In addition, the two questions below help us to think about what skills and resources people might have, and how we might pull all these ideas and responses together into a personal narrative or story:
- ‘What are your strengths?’ (What access to Power resources do you have?)
- ‘What is your story?’ (How does all this fit together?)

- The Framework offers a way of thinking about culturally-specific understandings of distress without seeing them through a Western diagnostic model. It encourages respect for the many creative and non-medical ways of supporting people around the world, and the varied forms of narrative and healing practices that are used across cultures.

Links:

- This link will take you to FAQs, the project documents and a possible 'Guided discussion' for one to one work in services or for peer support/self-help.
- • <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/introducing-power-threat-meaning-framework>
Appendices 2-14 in the Overview Document give examples of good practice in various service and nonservice settings. Videos of the talks from the launch can be seen here:
- • <https://vimeo.com/267401691>
- Interviews with project team and others are here: • <https://vimeo.com/264387393>
- Copies of the Overview document can be ordered from membernetworkservices@bps.org.uk.
-
- <https://cms.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/PTM%20Guided%20Discussion.pdf>
- All text and links from the British Psychological Society

Liberation Psychology

- Liberation psychology is most developed in Latin America, and was first articulated by the Spanish/Salvadoran social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró
- There is no one way to “do” liberation psychology and workers have employed further other approaches, not originally part of the framework, including psychodynamic and narrative approaches, community therapy, and ideology critique and popular (e.g. indigenous) psychologies as well as a variety of methods and practices from photo-voice to drama and dance.
- Mark Burton
- <https://libpsy.org/welcome/defining-liberation-psychology/>

Questions:

- The PTM Framework is useful because:
 - a. It tells us what is wrong with us
 - b. It helps us to understand how we have interpreted our experiences
 - c. It shows us a way to live our lives
- Liberation Psychology is a:
 - a. Strict approach to helping people
 - b. A way of working with people who feel trapped
 - c. A creative way of understanding ourselves and others

Ideas/Organisations that can help

- Mark Mckergow: Village in the City, <https://villageinthecity.net/>
- Cormach Russell – Understanding ground up community development from a practice perspective, <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/who-we-are/cormac-russell/>
- Mentoring Course delivered to parents/families/residents/volunteers

Thoughts/Ideas/Suggestions

- What thoughts do you have about the development of your organization/service?
- Discuss these with a small group
- Write down your ideas/thoughts on a Post-it sticker (maximum of 3, one per sticker)
- On a different coloured sticker write down any actions that will result from this idea
- Stick them onto them to the wall

Thank You!

- Please keep and reuse this PPT
- Please stay in touch with your thoughts and developments
- Brian De Lord

Email: bdelord@double-helix.org.uk

Mobile: +447920 428 608

Good Luck!