

Evaluation Cafe: February 17, 2009

Robert A. Wertkin, DSW, Professor

School of Social Work

387-3197

Bwertkin@aol.com

“Human relationships always help us carry on because they always presuppose further developments, a future – and also because we live as if our only task was precisely to have relationships with other people.”

Albert Camus

“I may forget what you said, but I will never forget how you made me feel.”

Unknown origins

“Too much agreement kills the
chat.”

Eldridge Cleaver

“It is not our purpose to become each other; it is to recognize each other, to learn to see the other and honor him [sic] for what he is.”

Hermann Hesse

- ▣ Teaching Research and Evaluation at WMU since 1981
- ▣ Independent (local evaluator) since 1988.
- ▣ Early Education, Adult Literacy, Child Welfare, Public Welfare, Legal Justice

- ▣ Almost always an external consultant.
- ▣ 1099 contractor
- ▣ Soft money
- ▣ Often involved in the procurement of the funding as a grant writer and collaborator. When funded, I become the local evaluator.

▣ Have to bridge the two worlds.
There is the world of direct providers of services with all the passion and drama and trials and frustrations and joys and challenges ... and the world of the evaluator more tidy, less chaotic, devoid of the struggles and drama that direct service folk experience.

- ▣ The evaluator tends to have less at stake than the consumer.
- ▣ Sensitive to these differences.
- ▣ Aware of the differing perspectives and languages and how they may serve as a barrier.

- ▣ Critical question is “how can I best connect.”
- ▣ Can't be afraid of intimacy.
- ▣ Some see connecting as a boundary violation. I disagree.

▣ A competent professional maintains necessary boundaries while developing connection to staff.

▣ This duality takes practice.

▣ What is a “relationship?”

▣ Hard to operationally define but we know what it is intrinsically.

▣ Terms that shape this concept include: emotional bonding, reciprocity, symmetry, recognized and received, cared for, understood, sustained, meaningful sharing, respectful, nourished, loved, electricity.

▣ Connection can be on single or multiple domains: affective, cognitive, physical, or spiritual.

- ▣ What are the building blocks to relationships?
- ▣ These are constructs thus have their limitations.

▣ Empathy – preparatory and ongoing. Not to be confused with sympathy. Conveying understanding of how someone feels through words and actions.

▣ Rapport: that feeling of comfort between folks, an easy feeling of getting along and in sync with each other.

▣ Trust : a sense that someone is safe and we can share our feelings and thoughts. We can risk with those we trust because there is a sense of predictability based on past occurrences or a working model.

▣ Caring: convey that you have a concern about others and want to help and support them.

Maslach – Burnout

- ▣ Important to understand the stages as they relate to our ability to connect.
- ▣ The three stages: emotional exhaustion, blaming, and self-doubt.

- ▣ To be able to connect calls for continual vigilance of our emotional and physical state.
- ▣ Are we in balance?

Develop Emotional intelligence (Goleman)

- ▣ Self-awareness
- ▣ Self-regulation
- ▣ Motivation
- ▣ Empathy
- ▣ Social Skills

▣ Self-awareness: understand one's moods and emotions and how they affect behavior, cognition, and effect on others.

▣ Self-regulation: the ability to redirect oneself when I am being negative, judgmental, and such. Takes great discipline to hold back certain impulses in consideration of the long term effects.

▣ Motivation: that which drives us that goes beyond the usual rewards. Persistence is importance.

▣ Empathy: understanding others including why they are the way they are.

▣ Social skills: allows us to manage relationships and build on these.

- ▣ Practice the Zone Theory. A, B, and C.
- ▣ This creates clarity and trust.

- ▣ A - I decide.

- ▣ B - I ask for your input but I still decide.

- ▣ C - Only consensus decision is acceptable.

What else is important?

- ▣ Groups are an integral part of our work and where important relationship development occurs and is sustained.
- ▣ Keen understanding of group dynamics including: how groups form; power differential and role theory; factions and rotating allegiances; overt and hidden agendas, and subliminal suggestions and games.

And Also

- ▣ Epigenetic stages of development.
- ▣ Understanding these themes in human development will allow us to assess the best way to form relationships. Calls for our skills as human analysts.

And Finally

- ▣ Organizational life cycle.
- ▣ Organizational culture including quantity and quality of relationships, organizational patterns and norms, rewards and punishments.
- ▣ Context including history and present.