

An Unexpected Teacher

By Marcia Bates, Everett WA

Sometimes our teachers come in unexpected sizes. Mine showed up in my Montessori class for 3- to 6-year olds. The moment he entered the room, Lewis challenged everything I knew about working with young children. I had a room full of child-size furniture, shelves full of attractive materials, and books on Montessori and theology. But Lewis seemed to defy all I learned about this quiet method that calls forth children's natural spirituality through the use of hands-on materials.

When I invited Lewis to join in activities like pouring grains, he refused. When I led the children in movement or singing, he clowned. When my frustration came out in a stern effort to force his cooperation, he ran. Literally.

Week after week I failed to engage Lewis. When I gave him space, he made messes. When I stepped in to correct and set limits, he broke materials. I began to dread our class time together; I was growing to fear Lewis and my inability to reach him.

Montessori's approach is scientific: observe the child. What did Lewis need? What activity would help him? One of my assistants saw it: "Lewis needs undivided attention." This observation clicked with me. Lewis was the youngest of four children, and one of his sisters had been diagnosed with leukemia when he was just a baby. As a result, undivided attention was in short supply for Lewis.

Now I knew what he was seeking. But I was left with a puzzle: how could I address his need when his behavior triggered my frustration and stern forceful-

ness? I had to find a different response.

Outside of class, I took daily "times to be" in order nurture my positive qualities, including those that brought me satisfaction in my teaching. In class, I focused on giving Lewis freedom, and spent as much time with him as I could.



Marcia Bates with her son, Tyler

Although he continued to alternate between disrupting and leaving the room, I felt and began to act differently because I could see the need beneath his behavior. Thanks to nurturing my being, I felt more compassion for myself when my habitual reaction was triggered.

Finally one day, something new emerged in me. Lewis left the classroom again and was writing on a white board in the next room. I followed and, consciously keeping my stern impulses in check, I gently gave him a time limit for using the white board. Then I offered him my hand, inviting him back to class to work with me. He accepted the limit and came. I followed my intuition in offering him activities and modifying the presentations for him. As long as I was able to stay engaged with him personally, he was able to accept my limits and work appropriately.

This experience was a breakthrough for me. It felt new to check my default response of stern force, and to engage Lewis with warmth and flexibility while maintaining appropriate limits. I was using new creativity, intelligence and my intuition to choose materials and approaches that would work for him. It was as if all the gears and pistons in my car's engine were working together for me. My accompanist helped me identify my deep conscience at work in this experience; it was synthesizing the activity of my being, my intellect, and my sensations so that they functioned together, each playing its role.

As I reflected on this important moment, compassion for Lewis stirred in me. I could recognize Lewis's need to be seen from the "original child" deep within myself. It felt like a path had been cleared between us, and now a true relationship was possible. My sensation was of two cupped hands – one holding

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In This Edition...

...we explore how PRH Education supports growth — often complementing other methods. On this first page, **Marcia Bates** relates how caring for her own reactivity helped her develop acceptance and compassion with others. On page two, **Susan Wake** compares and contrasts her experiences of PRH Education and counseling. On page three, the dual use of PRH tools and a 12-Step Program are the key to **Lynda Hayes'** authentic life; and **Bill and Judy Kelly** share how PRH methods for in-depth sharing bring couples closer. We finish on page four with **Paula Evitts'** review of a book about forgiveness, along with a poetic reflection by **Bill Kelly**.

Two Approaches to Growth

By Susan Wake, BS, MBA, MA, Seattle WA

I have been eager to understand how counseling differs from “PRH Helping Relationship.” Over my adult life, I have been fortunate enough to receive professional counseling that has been invaluable to me as I experienced marriage, divorce, remarriage, two children, and multiple life events. I continue to get counseling help for specific situations. My involvement with PRH Education started in 2003 when my husband Doug and I attended a couples’ workshop in Tacoma. Since then, I have participated in eight or nine workshops with and without Doug, and I have belonged to three growth groups. I also had some training in PRH Helping Relationship and practice this approach with a PRH Educator-in-training.



Susan Wake

Soon after my delight with self-discovery in PRH Education, I went back to school. I had decided, at the age of 52, on a major career change: obtaining an M.A. in Systems and Family Counseling, while continuing to engage in PRH Education.

Drawing on all of this support, education and experience, I want to share my observations about how “counseling” differs from PRH Helping Relationship. Depending on the counselor, these two approaches to growth can be quite similar. However, the major differences I perceive are in three areas:

1. PRH Education takes place in community. PRH workshops, growth groups, and even Helping Relationship all connect individuals on an equal footing. Group leaders and Helpers in the PRH model are life-long learners, not “experts.” We hear each other’s stories as a piece of our own story. Many programs train counselors to be the “experts” rather than partners in the unfolding of personal stories. Correspondingly, clients seeking help from counseling professionals may then resort to pursuing outside advice or confirmation, rather than seeking assistance in building their own inner resources. These elements together tend to reinforce the belief that the counseling expert knows more about our inner world than we do.
2. PRH Education assumes I am responsible for my smiles (or tears) — that is, for which way my wrinkles turn. The focus on the “here and now” and current sensations leads me to own my internal experience. At times in PRH work, I have traveled into past wounds and my history of story-making around them. Yet, ultimately, my current sensations

and what I write, speak, and do about them is what matters. Some branches of counseling focus on this in-the-moment, behavioral approach as well. However — even in these approaches — the counseling relationship is still one-way and not community based.

3. PRH Education assumes that learning never ends. In the PRH model I am not solving problems; I am growing my being. Once I have tapped my inner wisdom, this growth happens even if I am not striving for it or solving a problem. In contrast, counseling work involves overcoming problems and striving for a measurable outcome. Counseling engagements have defined starting and ending points. (This may be driven by our health care and medical payment models, but it is a reality.)

When I went back to school after starting my PRH journey, I did so because my mind — or ego, or “I” — could not let go of the idea that there had to be a logical explanation for all the growth I was experiencing. I needed to tie this growth to science, traditional education and proven theories. I wanted to understand why PRH Education “works.”

Four years later I can talk about various counseling theories; and I have added another degree and a couple more jobs to my resumé. This has helped me feel more comfortable when the

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random person asks, “So... what do you do?” Until recently, answering only, “I am busy being,” was not enough with many of my acquaintances. However, my PRH community has consistently understood this new “enough-ness” in me. I don’t assume that many of my associates in the counseling world would understand. In the business world I came from earlier in life, this answer would be quite puzzling to many!

Who knows if I would have arrived at this point of “enough-ness” without PRH — or even without traditional counseling? I can’t go back and experiment with this question. At this point, I seek counseling primarily to consult about how to

Who knows if I would have arrived at this point of “enough-ness” without PRH, or even without traditional counseling?

help my loved ones in mental health systems — though I often derive personal benefits, as well. PRH Education is for my growth and where I experience a community of adults committed to their growth in all areas of living.

This distinction may shift again as I continue to grow. In the meantime — as I survey all the working, studying, writing, living, and reading I have done — I honor the “student of life” in me, and I honor the same in those around me. ■■■

Stepping into Growth and Healing

by Lynda Hayes, Pleasant Hill CA

Alcohol and food kept me trapped in a vicious cycle between chemical/emotional cravings and my unwavering longing to be 100% Lynda. As hard as I tried to change unsatisfying patterns, I could not. I would diet all week, but weekend activities always led back to food and alcohol abuse. Almost every Monday I felt remorse and the draining effects of overeating and drinking. I could clearly see how my use of food and alcohol were impacting my self-esteem, personal relationships and my professional life -- but this awareness was not enough to make me stop.

From the age of 30 to 50, this lifestyle kept me disassociated from my deepest self and I grew unhappier with each passing year. My efforts to grow and heal included endless diets, therapy of all types, and spiritual retreats and practices, including twenty years of intermittent PRH growth work.

Despite these efforts, it was not until I completely gave up flour and sugar and committed to work a twelve-step program for food addiction that I was able to step fully onto the solid ground of my being. The daily rituals and structures of the twelve steps, along with the meetings and supportive relationships, have proven to be the right spiritual path for me.

As I practice the discipline of my twelve-step program, I am better able to benefit from my PRH Education. I feel my healing and growth work transforming me like never before. It feels wonderful to have unwavering confidence and to successfully manage my life. Today it is possible for me to be authentic and consistent as I progress toward becoming fully myself.

I use PRH tools daily to maintain a solid state of being, and to grow in my capacity to manage and celebrate my life. I use a binder to store my PRH writing tools and plenty of paper, as well as watercolor paper and supplies for creative expression. I meet with my accompanist every other week to share my discoveries, insights, pain, and joy. She helps me to see pathways to follow.

When I apply PRH tools, I live with awareness by collecting my inner cues and consulting my being and deep conscience when making choices. This results in new, satisfying acts of daily living, such as my choices of clothing, bedtimes, reading material, breaks at work, self care, gentle listening, slower walking, exercise, letting go of others, tapping my wisdom, and arranging my daily environments to suit my needs.

Grief, fears, and regrets used to steal days from me. I felt I was in the fog of a half-lived life. Today, fears can still creep in and rob me of hours, if I allow obsessive worries to take over. Persistent pockets of pain in my sensibility can draw me under if I am not careful. What has changed is my capacity to use my PRH tools to clarify what is happening in the moment. I can now distinguish between my situation and what I am feeling in the situation, which allows me expanded freedom to step into new and healthy life choices.

PRH helps me to live the serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Today it is a pleasure to fully live my daily life. My 12-step and PRH practices are a winning combination that leads me directly toward my goal of being 100% Lynda. My life finally feels like it is my own. ■■■■

In-depth Sharing -- A Gift for Couples

by Bill and Judy Kelly, PRH Educators, Tacoma WA

Couples who thrive together have a commitment to sharing with each other their personal experiences. This includes their feelings and their inner experiences of daily living, as well as their hopes and dreams.

Some themes for in-depth sharing as a couple are especially life-giving:

- Describing the bond with my partner and naming the qualities I experience
- Focusing on the sense of meaning in my life and in our life as couple
- Facing an important challenge with discernment, courage, and creativity
- Exploring my love and aspirations for our children

Time, quiet, and a method for self-reflection are necessary to experience the sensations of these being-level truths, and to find words to describe them.

In the PRH Growth Program, groups are available for couples to increase their capacity to share in-depth. In a recent couple's growth group, Jeremy reflected after sharing in-depth with his partner, Fran:

"I had felt like what I would share was... from my head. But no, I listen to you and newly realize we are on the same journey, side by side. Thank you.

*I have a discordant feeling as I read my piece.
What is right? Is there a right?*

But there IS clarity –

*like it is 20 degrees and the snow is crunching under my feet,
like it does only on a very cold day.*

Cold and clear.

Very clear.

I am aware of my nose, my breath, my life, my being.

Clearly, I feel called to listen...

*to speak clearly...
and to accept more."*

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the undefined treasures within me, the other holding the undefined treasures within him.

This breakthrough experience with Lewis continued to bear fruit in my life during the weeks and months that followed. I wasn't forcing things in my relationships as much. I wasn't feeling so many impulses to advise or fix my friends. I was more able to accept each of them for who they are, rather than looking for one of them to be "all things" to me. I found myself enjoying each one more. I began to experience my friendships – even with their limitations – as pure gift.

Soon after, for my 50th birthday, I threw a big party to celebrate my relationships. My friend Lewis was my guest of honor. ■■■■

Book Review

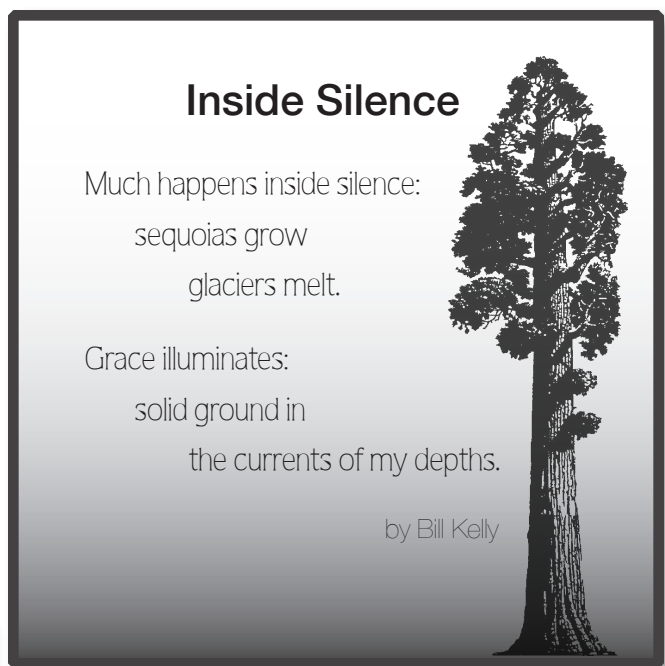


No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World

by Michael Henderson (2009) Waco: Baylor University Press

Reviewed by Paula Evitts, PRH Educator, Great Falls MT

What a find! Michael Henderson, a British journalist, shows the power of forgiveness and what it can accomplish. Through many real-life heroic stories, world leaders and peace seekers demonstrate effective instances of forgiveness.

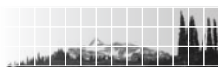


In one section, Dr. Donna Hicks names ten essential elements of dignity which bring mutuality. To me, these describe aspects of living from the "being."

1. Honor each one's dignity.
2. Recognize and acknowledge each one's perspective.
3. Include all so there is a feeling of belonging.
4. Create safety for the other.
5. Treat others fairly and with equality.
6. Ensure freedom from domination.
7. Seek understanding.
8. Give others the benefit of the doubt.
9. Respond to another's expressed concerns.
10. Take responsibility for harm you have caused.



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