grove youth

Ten Essential Concepts for Christian Youth Work

Sally Nash
Jo Whitehead

Y40

Contents

THE GROVE YOUTH SERIES
WAS STARTED TEN YEARS AGO BY MIDLANDS CYM WITH THE SUPPORT OF OTHER CYM CENTRES AND ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS YOUTH FOR CHRIST, CPAS AND SCRIPTURE UNION.

Midlands CYM

For more information about our courses and resources, please contact mcym@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk or visit www.cym.ac.uk

First Impression September 2015
ISSN 1748-3492
ISBN 978 1 85174 950 8

1 Introduction

'There is nothing new under the sun' says the author of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 1.9). The ten key concepts in this book are not new but some may be new to you or applied in a fresh way. Our hope is that in reading this booklet you will experience at least one light bulb moment and find something which helps you to be a more effective youth worker.

The Grove Youth series is ten years old in October 2015 and we wanted to celebrate by inviting ten of our previous authors to write about a key concept which has helped them in their ministry. While some learning is individual we perhaps learn most in community, from each other, from those who have walked this path before. This booklet represents well over two hundred years of experience of work with young people and we have sought to offer insights which can inspire, encourage or challenge and lead to changed practice.

As an editorial group, we reflected on what we thought the changes had been over the past ten years, realizing it was important to include concepts that were transferable into a range of contexts, as the world of young people changes so quickly.

When we started the Grove Youth series there was still a statutory youth service in many parts of the country and the number of churches employing youth workers seemed to be growing. Now we are in a period of austerity, with young people having been on the receiving end of cuts in many areas, while being expected to stay on in education until they are aged 18. It is not an easy time to be a young person: a life lived in part online means image is more important and perhaps more manufactured and controlled; you, or at least the online you, are accessible 24 hours a day and comments made or pictures posted may be out of your control and at times hurtful. 'Banter' is a commonly used word but there is a fine line between banter and bullying. The culture is sexualized, pornography is easy to access, there can be pressure to 'sext' and success can sometimes be measured in numbers of likes and followers. Mental-health issues appear to be rising and youth workers increasingly find themselves engaged in conversations about self-harm, eating disorders and self-medicating with legal highs, drugs and alcohol.

Increased family breakdown and geographical mobility mean that the extended family is not always available and thus the involvement of other adults

with young people may have enhanced significance.[1] We have also observed that trust is not so readily given and has to be earned over time. However, young people's norms and mores are changing, which can mean an increasing acceptance and tolerance of those who are different, although this is not always evident in actual behaviour, which can be cruel to those who do not fit whatever the local norm is.

Lastly, we are operating in a context where there is more suspicion towards the church; evangelical views, which used to be mainstream, are now sometimes presented as out of touch and even bigoted. Levels of biblical literacy seem to be very low and even knowledge about the key festivals can be absent. However, we continue to meet passionate youth workers who take a holistic approach to their work and want to see young people become all that God has created them to be. We hope that this booklet and the Grove Youth series make a small contribution to this aim.

2 Reflective and Ethical Practice

Reflective Practice—Paul Nash

'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' This last verse of Genesis 1 gives a glimpse into God as reflective practitioner. One of my favourite ways of reflecting on my practice is to ask three simple questions, 'What?' 'So what?' and 'Now what?'[2] I have found simple, memorable formulae helpful in making sure I am a reflective practitioner. 'Observe, assess and respond' is another that gets frequent outings.[3] I will share some of my other favourite approaches here.

Think Win-Win

Win-win is for me the most useful of Covey's seven habits.[4] I have learnt to change my mentality from 'I'm right and they're wrong' to 'How can both parties be happy with the outcome?' This seems to be more of a kingdom way of working, seeking to bless and not harm others.

Cannot Do to Can Do

When supporting youth workers I often draw this diagram:

Do well	Can do	Cannot do

I use it to encourage them to reflect on which of the areas that they find difficult, or struggle with, can be moved from 'cannot do' to 'can do.' In trying to do that, rather than moving all the way to 'do well,' you stop being negative about yourself because you are not brilliant in all areas of the work. It is a tool that encourages us to be gentle with ourselves, and also helps us think about what we can do that we may want to move to 'do well.' Often the conversation is about administration, which to some youth workers can feel like an oppressive list of things to do. Thinking 'can do' can help them see the importance of developing their skills in realistic increments.

Johari Window[5]

	Known to self	Unknown to self
Known to others	**Open area**	**Blind spot**
Unknown to others	**Hidden area**	**Unknown**

Because of its simplicity, the Johari window facilitates us being honest about how we see ourselves and how others see us. This is particularly helpful in addressing areas where we have not had as deep a self-understanding as might be helpful. We may also realize that we have hidden strengths and weaknesses compared with others with whom we work. Within a work context it is important to try and expand the size of the open area in relation to the other three, so that we can build effective mutual relationships. As we make ourselves accountable to each other and build team together this helps us grow as the body of Christ.

Consciously Competent[6]

Have you ever been driving along a road and suddenly realized you have little memory of how you got there? If so, you have probably got to the unconscious competence stage of learning a skill. When we start something new we are likely to be unconsciously incompetent in the way that we do it, moving into being consciously incompetent as we realize how much there is to learn and how little we currently know. We then move into conscious competence as we become more skilled and competent, which is a healthy place to minister from. The final stage is of unconscious competence. This may be helpful in some of what we do but when we reach that stage we may not always take the time to reflect, and we will need to ensure that we still keep learning and growing.

These are my favourites—share yours on the Grove Youth series Facebook page.

Paul is convenor of the Grove Youth series, Senior Chaplain at Birmingham Children's Hospital and a Tutor at Midlands CYM at St John's College, Nottingham.

Core Principles—Jo Dolby

In 1991, a ministerial conference was held with the aim of clarifying the purpose of statutory youth work. A definition was created, alongside four core youth work principles or values:

1 Voluntary Participation

Youth work needs to be based on the voluntary participation of the young people. It must be their choice to attend, participate and engage with youth workers and the services they offer. This resonates with our experience of God—we are all invited into relationship with him, but this is based on our free will and our voluntary participation. God does not force us to engage with him. This value also includes the desire to involve young people at every level of the planning, delivery and evaluation of youth services. Different types of work may require different types of participation, but good practice is to ensure that young people's participation is never tokenistic or as a result of manipulation from adults.

> *In practice:* A young person complains to a youth worker, telling them there is never anywhere to skateboard in the local community, and asks for their help in resolving the issue. Over a period of time the youth worker works with this young person and their friends to help them research, campaign, fundraise for and design a permanent skate park in the local community.

2 Informal Education

Most young people will have regular experience of formal education in a school setting. Whilst youth work can take place in a school environment, youth work should enable learning in an informal, unstructured way, over which the youth worker has little or no control. Informal education can be known as 'learning when you don't know you are learning' and it can often be unexpected or unintended.

> *In practice:* A group of young people work together to create a graffiti mural for the youth club wall. The aim is to create the mural, but in the evaluation young people identify that they have learned listening/communication skills and how to work as a team.

3 Empowerment

Young people often feel powerless to change their circumstances. The role of a youth worker is not to take control here, but to enable a young person to see that they do have power to make positive choices and changes to their own lives, and to the world around them. A commonly used picture is that of

scaffolding—youth workers provide whatever support is necessary to help that young person reach their potential. Eventually no scaffolding is needed as that young person has learned the skills necessary to empower themselves. They have the power to resolve a problem and they act to do so.

In practice: As a result of a relationship built with a youth worker through a mentoring programme for young offenders, a young woman understands for the first time the reasons for her offending. She gains confidence, new qualifications, acquires housing and gets a job, all of which enable her to make different choices and to not reoffend.

4 Equality of Opportunity

We all share many diverse qualities that make us unique, and we are all loved equally by our creative and imaginative God. These differences we have can be related to things like age, wealth, disability, family, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and many more. Equality of opportunity is about acknowledging how these differences can put some people at a disadvantage, and how we can take action to level the playing field, ensuring all have the same opportunities to succeed in life.

In practice: A church youth worker organizes a mission trip to Africa for their youth group. Young people from families with lower incomes express frustration that they cannot afford the cost and, in response, the group decides to raise the total cost for all the young people together, through fundraising activities and community donations. This gives everyone the chance to participate, regardless of income.

Danny Brierley argues for a collaborative approach between secular youth work and faith-based youth ministry, discussing the relevance of these four core values to Christian youth work and evidencing their importance in both fields.[7] Brierley also added a fifth core value—incarnation. As God became flesh and 'moved into the neighbourhood' (John 1.1, *The Message*) so we too are to enter into the worlds of young people as their guests, feeling what they feel, living our lives alongside theirs, experiencing what they experience and learning from their perspectives and stories.

Jo is a youth and community work lecturer at Bristol CYM and a youth worker for the local authority in Bath.

Anti-oppressive Practice—Nigel Pimlott

In my youth work to date, I have experienced decades of practice that has oppressed women, people from black and minority ethnic communities and

young people. I have witnessed appalling discrimination and lack of representation in churches and in theological colleges, in regarding who speaks at youth work conferences and in deciding which young people can be leaders. Of late, progress has been made in addressing this. Awareness of discrimination issues appears to have increased and many workers now model more inclusive practices. Indeed, it might be argued that we are now at the point where positive discrimination and the quest for diversity risk undermining the 'best person for the job' rationale.

A Reversal of Roles?

I recently encountered a reversal of normal discrimination roles in a conversation with a youth work conference organizer. In the build up to the conference the organizer said to me, 'I did have you in mind for a talk on "Creating a youth work strategy and vision," but in the end I asked someone else because I am conscious to get a good mix of gender and ethnicity and they were a good balance to our speaker line-up.' I was partly encouraged that attention was being given to gender and ethnicity balances when choosing the speakers; however, I really did not like being on the receiving end of such practice. In this moment, I—as a white, middle-aged male—glimpsed what many others experience regularly. I did not like it.

PCS

Neil Thompson's Personal, Cultural and Structural (PCS) model explains how power relationships operate between individuals, groups and across society and how these often manifest themselves in discrimination.[8] For Thompson, discrimination is 'the process that leads to oppression.'[9] He identifies three levels where discrimination occurs:

- At the personal (or prejudicial) level, where individual values, beliefs and feelings prevent non-judgmental practice;
- Culturally, where consensus, conformity and 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and unwritten rules regarding things like family, community and peer groups negatively impact anti-discriminatory behaviour;[10]
- At the structural level in society where policies shape institutional and systematic discrimination.

The Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Kataongole proclaims, 'Wherever the gospel is preached, we must remember that its good news will make you crazy. Jesus will put you at odds with the economic and political systems of our world. This gospel will force you to act, interrupting the world as it is...'[11] I find this quotation inspirational as well as theologically explanatory.

In broadening the context to encompass matters of personal, cultural and structural oppression, I believe Jesus puts us at odds with the world regarding gender, racial, age, sexuality and ability discrimination. I do not consider such discrimination has any place in the kingdom of God and we need to ensure our churches, youth clubs and Bible studies, for example, are interrupted when falling short of kingdom ideals. Encouragingly, Mark Montgomery (Youth Officer, Diocese of Chester) does this, using the PCS model to help people 'reflect on how churches and workers engage with young people and how their practices may include or exclude people.'[12]

Jesus as a Model

We see in Jesus' ministry how he interrupted the world, setting new, upside-down standards. At the personal level, he valued those discriminated against, becoming the friend of the poor and sinners (*eg* Matt 11.19; 21.31–2; Luke 19.1–10). At a cultural level he redefined matters of right and wrong, often being at odds with community and family expectations (*eg* Matt 25.31–46; Mark 3), challenging dominant structural narratives of societal power and systems of governance (*eg* Matt 21.1–17; Mark 7.1–13; Luke 20.1–19).

I really did not like being overlooked for the conference on the grounds of my gender and race. At the time I did have a bit of a rant and a sulk, but the experience did raise my consciousness levels about what it is like to be on the receiving end of discrimination.

Despite the fact that usual discrimination roles were reversed in my case, the incident acted as a reminder to ensure that I continually seek to avoid personally, culturally and structurally discriminating against anyone. Sarah Page reminds us that 'We all need our oppressive beliefs challenged...When we work in any setting we need to reflect on how the structure and values might lead to oppression and how we might reduce/eliminate this as best as possible.'[13] I do not always get this right, but I can only say 'Amen' to what Sarah says.

Nigel works for the Methodist Church as a regional training and development officer. He previously worked for Frontier Youth Trust for over 15 years.

3 Youth Work in Practice

Lifecycle Development Theory—Steve Emery-Wright

Erik Erikson's stages of psychological and social development have been highly influential in understanding human growth. His theory has helped shape, among others, understandings of identity development, faith development and education.[14] Erikson identifies eight stages through which a human being passes from infancy to late adulthood (see chart overleaf). He argues that these stages are universal across gender and culture. Each stage successfully or unsuccessfully builds on the former by negotiating between two conflicting psychological/social forces that are dominant to people in that age group. If the challenge of each stage is not effectively completed then it is likely to reappear as a problem in the future. Each phase has a significant question to be answered and key relationships that assist in negotiating the psychosocial challenges of finding the answers.

One hundred years ago my great-grandfather Nathaniel knew what he would do with his life, how he would fit in and what special talents he had. His father was a farmer, a family man, and a churchgoer who cared for his neighbours, and that is who Nathaniel would be. Erikson observed that adolescents required a moratorium—a 'time-out' from adult commitments—and roles in which young people could construct their identity through relating to others, their culture and social institutions. They would embrace a unique 'story' of themselves that would guide them through life and give it meaning and direction. You, like me, can probably name young people you work with who are struggling to find an identity. Stories like the caring lad whose passion is to help people in need, or the competitive young woman who is driven in all she does, wanting to be the best scholar so she can make a name for herself. Then there are the young people who cannot seem to find any direction, who are easily led, who cannot find a 'self' that they like.

It is during the adolescent years that people tend to ask the really big questions in life. What makes life worth living? Where does my life fit in? Who will love me and who can I love? Young people ask the biggest questions, seek to make lifelong decisions, are looking to make a difference, and are looking to fit in. From a theological standpoint it is as if God created a special time in people's lives when they would developmentally be spiritual seekers.

James Loder[15] and Kenda Creasy Dean[16] have created theologies of young people and youth ministry largely based on Erikson's insights. Friends are identified as the significant relationship that guides them through the struggle. This is true to an extent but risks underestimating the importance that parents and significant adult figures play as a stabilizing influence and who embody their aspirations. Erikson's theory points to the need for a network of intergenerational relationships in order to construct a healthy identity, including a spiritual identity.[17]

The theory can be questioned in terms of whether the stages must be sequential and whether identity formation is ever completed. Even with criticisms it is clear that lifecycle theory will continue to be helpful and important for those working with young people.

Age estimate[18]	Basic strengths	Psychosocial crisis or tension	Significant relationship	Existential question	Examples of key elements
0–2 years	Hope	Basic trust *vs* mistrust	Mother	Can I trust the world?	Feeding, abandonment
2–4 years	Will	Autonomy *vs* shame and doubt	Parents	Is it okay to be me?	Toilet training, clothing themselves
4–5 years	Purpose	Initiative *vs* guilt	Family	Is it okay for me to do, move and act?	Exploring, using tools or making art
5–12 years	Competence	Industry *vs* inferiority	Neighbours, school	Can I make it in the world of people and things?	School, sports
13–19 years	Fidelity	Identity *vs* role confusion	Peers, role model	Who am I? Who can I be?	Social relationships
20–39 years	Love	Intimacy *vs* isolation	Friends, partners	Can I love?	Romantic relationships
40–64 years	Care	Generativity *vs* stagnation	Household, workmates	Can I make my life count?	Work, parenthood
65-death	Wisdom	Ego integrity *vs* despair	Humankind, my kind	Is it okay to have been me?	Reflection on life

Steve is MA Programme Leader and a Lecturer in Contextual Theology at Cliff College, Derbyshire.

Facilitating Learning—Nigel Roberts

I grew up in a school system which measured intelligence by the scores we gained in tests. When I moved into youth work the difference in how people learned became evident. Young people were unfairly labelled 'difficult,' 'unintelligent' or 'problematic' by staff and families. I was grateful that early on I encountered, first, learning styles and, later, multiple intelligences.[19]

Learning Styles

Honey and Mumford categorized four learning styles, suggesting that to meet learners' needs, those who taught had to understand and work with these different styles.[20] I recognized these styles within my own teams. One year there was a wonderful *theorist* who came to team times armed with notes made during the week, ready to listen to and share thoughts on the day's Bible study. There was an *activist* who only understood something when he had tried it for himself. So, a study on fasting made no sense until we put it into practice. One girl was the perfect *reflector*—she instituted team quiet days and took us to the hills above our town to pray. She always started her comments with the phrase, 'I've been thinking about...' I am something of a mix of theorist and reflector so was grateful that on the team we had a *pragmatist* who insisted on bringing any discussion down to earth. 'How does it work?' was his favourite phrase. These learning styles are represented in groups and congregations around the country and need an appropriate response. One size no longer fits all.

Children are natural learners. Montessori observed that if a child was not learning it was not because they did not want to; rather it was because they were not being taught in a way that they understood. 'Follow the child,' she said, 'and they will learn.'[21] As a youth worker I have to do just that. I have to create sessions that contain elements that appeal to everyone and that enable the same learning objectives to be met by all. It is no use having a great game that appeals to activists if the main learning objectives are met through an up-front talk. I have to put myself not just in the shoes of the young people but into their minds. It is an incarnational approach that reminds me of Jesus.

We see in Scripture that Jesus knew what was in minds and hearts (John 2.24). Because Jesus chose to inhabit a human form he understands humanity and used that understanding as a basis for all his teaching. Throughout Scripture we see examples of Jesus' varied teaching styles. He sent disciples on mission, appealing to activists and pragmatists alike (Luke 10.1ff). He encouraged reflection in the parables; he appealed to theorists in the Sermon on the Mount. He taught lessons from life as storms arose in a boat. As his followers today, we can learn from his commitment to teaching that sought understanding.

Multiple Intelligences

According to a recent intelligence test I have an IQ of over 130. My brother is an electrician and can turn his hand to anything practical. So who is the most intelligent? Gardner's work on multiple intelligences suggests that some people have particular intelligences at which they score highly. So I am a dunce in music but score highly in linguistic intelligence. His work is important because it helps redefine failure and success. Our current education system is concerned primarily with attainment. It recognizes only a person's ability in a more academic model. My daughter, who has special needs, failed every GCSE she took. In the world's eyes she is a failure. However, she won her FE college 'student of the year' award because she worked hard, got on well with people and was helpful to everyone. In Gardner's view of things, she was a genius in interpersonal intelligence. Gardener enables us to see value in everyone we meet; he says we are gifted and talented individuals, all with something that we can bring to our communities. This is seen by writers such as Knowler as crucial to developing the sense of belonging that facilitates learning.[22] It is an approach that has echoes of Scripture at its heart. I am reminded of Ps 139.14 and Paul's frustrations when he asks 'Are all apostles?' in 1 Cor 12.29ff. By adopting these theories in our practice we do a service to the young people we work with and can work with an assurance that Jesus was here before us.

Nigel works as a tutor with MCYM specializing in schools work. He is also involved in running a youth theatre and teaching at a secondary school.

The NAOMIE Planning Tool—Linda Hopkins

I would hazard a guess that most people do not go into youth work because of the planning that they will be doing, but are driven by a desire to engage with young people in fun and exciting ways, to support and nurture them in faith and development. The thought of planning may conjure up images of dry meetings and paperwork. However, this does not have to be the case, and it is important to ask how good planning can help us more effectively undertake our ministry with young people.

Within youth work there is often a tension between the spontaneous and the structured, pragmatic and reflective, order and chaos. There is a biblical theme here reflected in the story of creation. God created out of chaos, yet there was structure to the creative order and beauty within it (Gen 1.31). Planning enables the youth worker to move from a hunch or a good idea to purposeful action that facilitates creativity, allows for spontaneity and for beautiful God-breathed things to happen!

Good planning also encourages youth workers to consider the values and purpose within their ministry and put young people and their needs first

rather than those of the youth worker or the organization. This, I feel, is a gospel principle. As Christian workers we are called to serve others, especially the vulnerable whom Christ welcomed from the margins to the centre, and gave special attention to in his ministry and teaching. Using a planning tool enables us to start with the young people who are the reason for our ministry, and to reflect on what God might be calling us to within our work with them.

There are various planning tools and models; one of these is NAOMIE. It stands for:

Needs	of the young person/young people/group or activity
Aims	the general, overall purpose
Objectives	the specifics of what you hope to achieve
Method	the approach, activity, resources needed to meet the objectives
Implementation	putting the plan into action
Evaluation	critically reviewing and reflecting on the process, considering next steps

The planning tool can be used on different levels; for example, for:

- addressing individual need(s)of a young person and their specific situation;
- planning a youth event or activity;
- deciding on the focus for the youth work at a church or project.

Once completed, NAOMIE encourages us to start again, becoming a cyclical and developmental process as we identify new needs and work through how we will meet aims and objectives for the good of the young people and youth ministry.

An example of using the NAOMIE tool:

Needs: The young people asked to be more involved in leading worship.

Aims: This fitted with the wider aims of the youth work to nurture young people into the faith, enabling them to become part of the worshipping community.

Objectives: A youth worker spoke with the church leadership, who invited the young people to lead an evening service the next month.

Method: The youth workers worked with the young people over a number of weeks to come up with a theme and structure for the service.

Implementation: young people took specific roles during the service (music, speaking, prayers etc) and all the young people contributed ideas.

Evaluation: The service went well.

At the next youth meeting more of a focused evaluation took place. The overwhelming response from the young people was that it had been great, but could they become more involved in the normal weekly services, as not everyone could commit to taking a whole service regularly? The youth workers also reflected that it had taken a lot of their resources to facilitate the young people leading a service on their own.

Starting the process again:

Comments and ideas were fed back to the church leaders. This led them to work through the planning process again with the new needs of encouraging young people's more regular involvement in worship. They started intentionally to reflect on what it might mean to be an intergenerational worshipping community and to consider the needs of young people in their spiritual and faith development.

Linda is a tutor at Northern Baptist College in Manchester; an experienced youth worker, she teaches on working with young people and practical theology.

Leadership—Liz Dumain

John Adair was born in 1934, and is recognized as developing one of the most instantly recognizable models of leadership and management theory. His diagram of three overlapping circles focuses attention on the interaction between task, team and the individual, each circle both influencing and being influenced by the others.

His model—'Action-Centred Leadership'—states that the *Task* (goals and objectives) must overlap with team and individuals because one person alone cannot succeed. It thus requires a *Team* (the combined performance of group), made up from *Individuals* with their own attributes, strengths, needs, priorities and weaknesses working as a team to achieve the common task. He suggests that the effective leader is one who keeps all three circles in balance. Adair's thesis is that if any one element is neglected, the others will suffer as a result.

Steven is a youth leader planning a new youth café. Using this model he would need to consider:

Task: what is the purpose of the café, what needs to be achieved and how will they do it? Does everyone understand what they are doing and why they are doing it?

Team: who is helping and what do they need? Are they volunteers or paid staff? Are jobs shared fairly? Are they interacting well with the young people? How are they relating to each other?

Individual: what are their skills, needs and motivations? Are people doing the most appropriate roles? For example, is the introverted person on the door confident to deal with the 'arrival crush' and why would the sports-mad helper be running the tuck shop?

There is a tension in some situations where the three elements may appear to conflict with each other. In the given example, pressure on time and resources from the church leaders may lead the group to concentrate on the task (opening a café) to the detriment of the people involved (long hours, tiring preparation and lack of opportunity to get to know each other). However, too much time taken building the team through endless planning meetings without moving forward with the task is likely to result in a loss of focus.

Luke 10 sees Jesus sending his disciples ahead of him. This occurs after he has spent time teaching and demonstrating his power. He gives them very clear instructions regarding the task and boundaries. It is possible to identify Adair's circles in his commissioning of the 72:

Jesus identifies the *task* and gains their commitment. 'The harvest is great but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields' (v 2). He is clear about the plan (vv 5–11), and then sends them out together in small *teams* of two, ensuring that there is support, and that resources within the group are spread across the places he is to visit and that each *individual* has a part to play (v 1). He communicates clearly that the task is challenging, but they have all the resources they need (vv 3–4). He holds a review and celebration with all the individuals when they return, supporting, praising and encouraging them (vv 17–20).

Similarly we see Nehemiah define the *task* of rebuilding walls (2.11–18), build *teams* (2.19), delegate roles relevant to *individuals* (3.1–32), encourage care for his *team* (4.14–20) and celebrate and review the *task* at its completion (8.10–12).

This contrasts sharply with Aaron in Exodus 32 who is aware of the *task* before Moses in receiving the commandments, and leads the people (*team*) in his absence. However, when the task takes longer than expected, Aaron becomes so focused on the expressed needs of the *individuals* asking for 'some gods

who can lead us' (v 1) that he loses sight of the task, thus causing God to be angry and Moses to return early (32.7–15).

As youth leaders we will regularly face situations that challenge our commitment to hold task, team and the individual in tension. Conflicting demands may seek to undermine our commitment to a vision we have received from God, the pressure of deadlines may drain our commitment to individuals, and these individuals themselves may disrupt our team development.

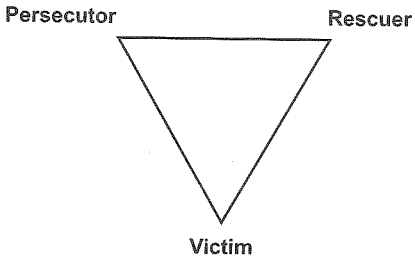
Adair's model serves us as both a useful tool in planning and managing our youth work, an easily applicable 'health check' in the process and a framework to review as we seek to serve a vision, develop those we have been entrusted to lead and offer opportunities to all to experience a 'life in all its fullness' (John 10.10).

Liz is Director of Local Ministries for Youth for Christ, overseeing the development of local YFC outreach projects across Britain.

4

Compassionate Practice

The Drama Triangle—Joel Tombs



What Is It?

It is visible everywhere—from footballers going down clutching their faces, to shrieks of 'You never listen to me!' from emotional teenagers. It is the victim mentality, the feeling that you are in some way wronged, the universe is against you and you should be compensated handsomely at once. The Drama Triangle is a way of understanding the 'games' we play. It could be a real light bulb moment in your ministry and even in your own personal growth.

Identified by Stephen Karpman in 1968, the Drama Triangle is a model that describes the interplay of three stereotypical egoistic roles people take up in the heat of the moment:[23]

> The *Victim* role—the person trying to find social or emotional purchase through playing the hard-done-by sufferer.
>
> The *Persecutor* role—the source of pressure or aggression of some kind, often to satisfy unhealthy motivations or frustrations.
>
> The *Rescuer* role—the part of the 'helper' who intervenes on behalf of the underdog but also has an egoistic reason to gain something from being the do-gooder.

These are not real characters. They are simulated stereotypes used in relational dysfunction. When we refer to the victim, we do not mean a real victim like the victim of bullying, but rather someone who chooses to clothe themselves with a victim mentality. Transactional analyst Claude Steiner says, 'The Victim

is not really as helpless as he feels, the Rescuer is not really helping, and the Persecutor does not really have a valid complaint.'[24] Often the persecutor might not even be a person; it could be a circumstance or set of conditions such as a string of bad luck or weather conditions.

These roles illustrate the psychological games we play with each other and help us to understand the dynamics of relationships and conflict. What is interesting is the psychological insight we gain from understanding and observing these roles in everyday life. Eric Berne, Karpman's mentor, taught him that in these games everyone is really hiding their true feelings or desires and struggling for power or advantage in some way.[25]

A Youth Work Example

One Sunday evening at youth group, you are struggling to keep the group focused on your (fascinating) session. There is tension in the air. You ask what is going on, and all hell breaks loose. Georgina accuses Mary of flirting with her boyfriend Ali, so Mary starts sobbing and receives copious hugs and concerned attention from the other girls. Ali feels sorry for her and asks Georgina to give her a break. Suddenly Mary's tears dry up and she jumps up to berate Ali for choosing Georgina over her, while Georgina starts crying and thus receives all the hugs and attention from the other girls. Ali then throws up his hands in desperation claiming he 'just can't win,' at which his mates console him and offer him their sweets on the way out to the car park, while Georgina chases after him shouting she is sorry and that she never meant to hurt him.

All three have had turns at being the victim, the persecutor and the rescuer—and all are trying to gain small victories in each role (while none of it has actually helped resolve the situation in the slightest). The drama triangle can be a way of seeing past the outward behaviour and into the heart of what is motivating that behaviour—the first step to helping the young people. Sadly, it can easily become more serious than this—if young people are constantly playing the victim to keep your attention it can manifest as an unhealthy situation of co-dependency. It can also relate to people's perceptions of God, who may in turn be expected to play the role of persecutor or rescuer depending on what the 'victim' wants or needs at that time.

A final word—how do we escape the dreaded drama triangle? Try placing the word 'not' before each role. 'I am not a victim.' This creates options. What would someone who is not playing the victim do in this situation…? Others have developed the model and Acey Choy describes 'The Winner's Triangle,' using the words 'assertive,' 'caring' and 'vulnerable.'[26]

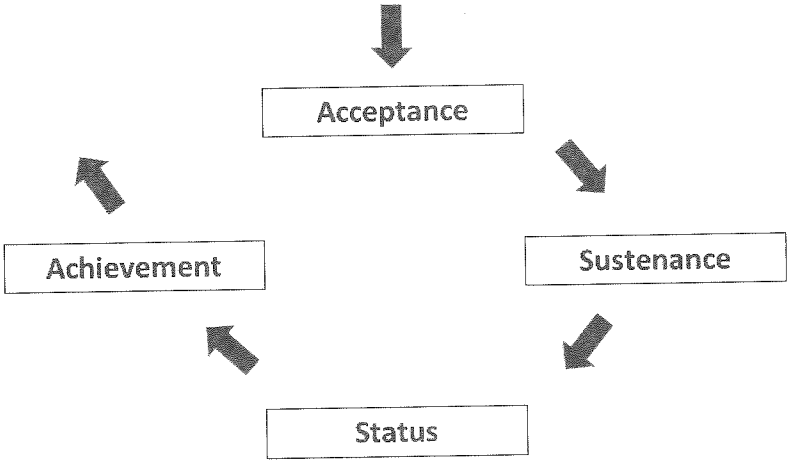
Joel is a youth worker/youth work mentor with a WW1 novel out—see www.therunningboy.com for details.

The Dynamic Cycle—Jo Whitehead

> Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace...learn to live freely and lightly.
> (Matt 11.28–30, *The Message*)

Any ministry, and youth ministry in particular, is demanding and the kind of 'unforced rhythms of grace' highlighted here sometimes seem hard to find. In an increasingly pressurized world, approaches to ministry are needed which offer an alternative to outcomes-driven values, which emphasize achievement and success.

The dynamic cycle, developed by Frank Lake in the 1960s, draws from psychodynamic theory and pastoral theology and is so called because it is a rhythm of ongoing taking in and giving out—all we do flows out of all we receive from God.[27]



Jesus as a Model for Ministry

This dynamic cycle is exemplified most fully in the life of Jesus.

Jesus is *accepted* by his Father and deeply knows it—as seen at his baptism (Matt 3.16–17) and throughout his ministry. This sense of acceptance is nurtured in and through a life of prayer and confident relationship with the Father (Luke 6.12; John 11.42).

Jesus is *sustained* in and through this relationship and draws confidence from it (John 3.35; 5.20; 14.11).

Through this he understands his *status* and identity in God, describing himself as the 'Son of God' (John 10.36), 'the light of the world' (John 8.12), 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14.6).

His life, work and *achievements* flow out of this and all he does and achieves is seen in the light of his relationship with God: 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise' (John 5.19).

Unhealthy and Healthy Ministry

The cycle is reversed when we focus first on *achievement* and strive to do things in order to gain *status*, which we hope will give us *sustenance* and help us experience *acceptance*. This unhealthy reversal of the cycle can be a result of the expectations of others (particularly when we were young), love given conditionally, our own sense of inadequacy or insecurity and a tendency to compare ourselves to others.

Turning the cycle around involves us recognizing that our sense of *acceptance* comes from the fact that we are created in God's image: he knows us completely (Psalm 139); God forgives us, accepts us and loves us unconditionally as his children (Romans 8). This foundation of acceptance gives us sustenance, helps us rest in God's presence without having to earn his love or approval. Our status as children of God is confirmed to us as we acknowledge and receive his love and allow the truth of Scripture to permeate into our hearts and minds. As we grow in confidence in our security in God, we serve not in a driven way but as a response to him, and we are free to achieve all God has for us. This is a healthy foundation for ministry—and also a vital message in the pastoral care we offer to the young people we work with.

Jo is Assistant Director of Midlands CYM.

Marker Posts and Shelters—Sally Nash

I love *The Message* version of Isa 2.3: 'He'll show us the way he works so we can live the way we're made.' One of the ways I try to live the way God made me is by having marker posts and shelters in my life. If you have ever walked the Pilgrims' Way across the sands to Holy Island in Northumbria you will know where the imagery is from.[28]

Having a rule of life gives me marker posts and shelters. However, I do not always find the word 'rule' helpful even though the root word is more about measurement than dictats. I have been in ministry for over 30 years and establishing a rule and rhythm of life has helped to sustain me. Shelters tend

to be people, places and practices where I can rest, recharge and recreate. Marker posts help me to have a clear aim, boundaries and priorities that help in shaping the pattern of my life. I structure my rule and rhythm in a grid where across the top is time: daily, weekly, monthly, annually and seasonally and down the side are the different areas: relationships (with God and others); rest and recreation; work and service; stewardship; home and family; church.

Self-care

Perhaps, more than anything else, marker posts and shelters have meant that I have learnt about self-care. For a long time I struggled with the concept then I found this insight from Parker J Palmer: 'Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to our true self and give it the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.'[29] Some of the self-care insights I identified through a research project are:

- regularly reflect on what sustains and nourishes us, considering body, mind and spirit;
- care as much for ourselves and those close to us as we do for young people;
- make time for ourselves in windows during the day;
- celebrate achievement or other significant milestones, including personal ones;
- find external support in ministry—a mentor, spiritual director or soul friend;
- identify and process our baggage and negative emotions;
- express gratitude and appreciation;
- be willing to question, reassess, challenge and change where necessary.

Being a Shelter or Marker Post for Others

Psalm 46 begins with the phrase, 'God is our strength and refuge' but there are times when a physical refuge or shelter is needed. If you are walking across the sands at Holy Island and see the water coming quickly towards you, the shelters offer a refuge. Sometimes we act as shelters or places of refuge for others; young people need safe places and safe people, and youth workers can offer that.

Young people may also see us as marker posts; we may show them the way, or be there for them to look at, perhaps from a distance. I can track back over my life and see how part of who I am has been shaped by the people who have been marker posts for me. I was politicized in my youth group as a teenager; I learnt about hospitality from living with Christians who opened their homes to me. Now I am older and perhaps do this for others, I have been challenged about the importance of being self-aware, understanding who I am and the way this might impact others. In that journey I have found tools like Myers-Briggs, the Enneagram and Belbin helpful as I understand who I am in relation to others, my strengths, weaknesses and areas for development.

To finish, another quotation from *The Message:* 'Life doesn't have to be like that—Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness' (John 10.10). Putting marker posts and shelters in place is one way of working towards this.

Sally is the Director of Midlands CYM and a self-supporting minister at Hodge Hill Church.

Notes

1 See http://www.joe.org/joe/2010october/tt4.php for a summary.

2 G Rolfe, D Freshwater and M Jasper, *Critical Reflection in Nursing and the Helping Professions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

3 From P Nash, *What Theology for Youth Work?* (Grove Youth booklet Y8).

4 S Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004)

5 See http://www.businessballs.com/johariwindowmodel.htm for further details.

6 See http://www.businessballs.com/consciouscompetencelearningmodel.htm for history and more detail.

7 D Brierley, *Joined Up* (Carlisle: Authentic Media, 2003).

8 N Thompson, *Anti-Discriminatory Practice: Equality, Diversity and Social Justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

9 Thompson, *op cit*, p xii.

10 Thompson, *op cit*, p 27.

11 E Katongole, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009) p 116.

12 In a social media discussion about the PCS model.

13 From the same discussion.

14 See for instance S J Schwartz *et al* (eds), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (New York: Springer, 2013).

15 J E Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

16 K Creasy Dean, *Practising Passion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

17 E Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964).

18 Adapted from charts found in E Erikson, *The Life Cycle Revisited* (London: Norton, 1998). Also from W Crain, *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2011) and http://web.cortland.edu/andersmd/ERIK/welcome.HTML

19 H Gardner, *Frames of Mind* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993).

20 P Honey and A Mumford, *The Manual of Learning Styles* (London: Peter Honey Publications, 1992).

21 M Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind* (London: BN Publications, 2008) p 116.

22 H Knowler, *Perspectives on Inclusion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

23 'Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis' in E Berne, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (London: Corgi, 1975) p 198. See also Karpman talking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCv3rd9lXt8

To celebrate ten years of youth-work publishing, the Grove Youth series presents insights from ten of its authors, each of whom has selected a key concept that has helped them in their ministry.

While some learning is individual we perhaps learn most from each other, and especially from those who have walked the same path. This booklet represents well over two hundred years of experience in working with young people, and offers insights that aim to inspire, encourage or challenge, and lead to changed practice.

Sally Nash is Director of the Midlands Institute for Children, Youth and Mission, and is Associate Minister at Hodge Hill Church, Birmingham. She enjoys writing and research, currently focusing on spiritual care and shame in the church. Sally blogs at www.markerpostsandshelters.wordpress.com, supports Spurs and enjoys good coffee, red wine and being by the sea.

Jo Whitehead is Assistant Director of Midlands CYM and is an experienced author, trainer and facilitator. She is currently doing doctoral research into whole-person learning and formation. She loves all things creative, walking, baking and spending time in the garden and her allotment.

£3.95
ISSN 1748-3492

GROVE BOOKS LIMITED
Ridley Hall Rd, Cambridge CB3 9HU
Tel: 01223 464748

Registered Charity No. 327014

Printed by Hassall & Lucking Ltd. Tel: 0115 973 3292

ISBN 978-1-85174-950-8