



Being Alongside

the magazine of **Being Alongside** / apcmh

The All-Age Need: to Be Heard

Natalie, a young mum, helps her daughter overcome a fear by really listening to the need, rather than lead with assumptions and quick fixes.



For me, the joy and value of doing the *Called to Listen* course is summed up in my children's reaction to being offered the opportunity to be listened to - for Mummy's 'listening homework'! They were eager to have their special time with Mummy and to afford her some much needed practice.

As a family, we are benefiting from the principles of listening.

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Help is at Hand

Samaritans: **08457 909090**

(national number which will put you through to your nearest branch)

Saneline: (6 - 11pm each night) **08457 678000**

Rethink Advisory Service: **08454 560455**

Young Minds Parents' Helpline: **08088 025544**

(9.30 - 4 weekdays, free from mobiles and landlines)

Carers in the Community: **01642 818332**

(led by Edna Hunneysett. This is her home number)

MIND: (Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm) **08457 660163**

Maytree: (24 / 7 + answerphone) **020 7263 7070**

The Barnabas Drop - In Sessions

*'Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas
(which means Son of Encouragement)' ...Acts 4:36*

St. Paul's Community Project *in partnership with BA / apcmh*

Mondays 2pm - 5pm

Plus various activities: Table tennis, dominoes, scrabble, art / craft,
poetry reading, tea / sandwiches / cakes and chat.

Wednesday 10am - 12pm

A more reflective discussion time with tea and biscuits, an opportunity to all
to share concerns or to receive one-to-one support (by appointment).

Free. All Welcome.

Venue: St Paul's Church Centre, 3 Rossmore Rd, NW1
(5 mins walk from Marylebone Station; buses 139 & 189 stop outside)

call: Sister Theresa: 020 7724 8517

*When he arrived & saw the wonderful things God was doing, he was filled with excitement & joy,
and encouraged the believers to stay close to The Lord whatever the cost. Barnabas was a kindly
person, full of the Holy Spirit & strong in faith. As a result large numbers of people were added to
the Lord.*

(Acts 11:19-24)

Anticipation

Do you remember waiting for Christmas or a birthday, as a small child? So much expectation about *having*. So much imagination, before the day: such a build up that the mind could hardly hold it all.

Soap operas, which are the acted cartoons of human emotion, usually present the outcome of all the anticipation, as a series of disasters promoted by, amongst other things, drunkenness. The drug is both the arousal and the suppression of joy.

In those dramas, it's as though everything hangs on a wedding and a funeral to become the biggest banks of feeling.

And then we are just unable to cope with so much.

Somebody I once met who helped people with substance dependency in prison (himself having been addicted) told me that the most difficult lesson to be learned is that wholesome life is not measured in powerful highs and lows, but rather aims at a sort of steady state (even when a bit grey!). The legend of Gautama (the Buddha) is all about how he learned this salutary lesson through grave experiences.

Experience taught him that every little human born becomes caught up in craving. The addictions are too various to mention, substances startling in their kinds: wine, sex and entertainment being only their symbols. Just as craving depends upon anticipation, so the cure needs the cleansed perception which we call hope.

The Buddha and the Christ show their disciples how to change the one into the other by a kind of concentrated living arising out of contemplation, where the aim is the present moment which may blossom into the eternal. And early Muslim Sufis, exasperated by the gaps in human language, called this state of realized anticipation, free of the mental torture of too much anticipation, *sober drunkenness*.

Being Alongside may well be an apt title for that special kind of enthusiastic, clear-headed living in the present.

Jesus summed up the common strand in religious wisdom by saying: Do not be anxious about the future: *now* is the time for concentrated effort.

The Lord's Prayer asks that we have bread enough for the day and a little over!

Jon Dean,
Chair. June 2012

Introducing Marlene Collins

Readers will be saddened by the departure of Mark Dadds as *Being Alongside's* Membership and Company Secretary. His wry sense of humour as well as his total commitment for those 'going through it' will be much missed. He has a 'calling' to Go West; Bristol's gain is certainly our loss.

In the meantime, he has been graciously working with Marlene Collins, who will be officially elevated to role of our Membership Secretary and Company Secretary wef 1 October, her address being c/o St Paul's Church centre, Rossmore Road, London NW1 6NJ. Marlene is happy to receive emails at mcollins16@sky.com and she can also be reached by dialling our Contact Line which is 02033 972 497 and then selecting option 1 on your phone's key pad. You can reach the newsletter editor on option 2, and our new Chair, Jon Dean, on Option 3. Charges are at BT Local Rate.

Marlene writes:

I moved from Wales to London in April 1980 taking up employment with Her Majesty's Courts' Service and have within the 15 months taken Early Departure from the now Ministry of Justice with the view to obtaining some part-time employment.

I have always enjoyed, in my spare time, volunteering work - Victim Support, Food Chain, Stewardship at Southwark Cathedral. Whilst attending Southwark Cathedral I have become involved in their Outreach Programme - Robes - which is a charity dealing with the Homeless in the Lambeth and Southwark Diocese. Provision is made during the winter months - Nov - April of nightly accommodation with an evening meal and breakfast. My involvement here has been to provide, along with my colleagues, the preparation and sharing of meals with our guests.

I have also, during the 18 months, been involved in fund raising for this charity. I was part of a group that last December organised a sponsored 'SLEEPOUT' in Southwark Cathedral grounds where the total amount raised was £63,000. We are planning another Sleepout this November!

Many thanks,

Marlene Collins

Thank You, Lionel

Lionel continues to be a long standing member of our National Committee, but his higher profile role has been as *Being Alongside's* Webmaster. Because the Internet has been truly revolutionary in the way people connect and relate these days, our site has been a key part of the our ability to reach out to mental health service providers, users and carers. Not only to reach out, but to receive their learning, insight and input. People have become members and involved through a few judicious clicks of the mouse around the site, and it is Lionel who originated this facility for us about fourteen years ago. Those who know about such things will have gleaned it is quite sophisticated, and therefore hungry for expertise and time.

Yet Lionel feels now is moment to take it to the next stage to allow full interaction by setting up differentiated protocols for access, and to provide facilities so that it, as far as people's contributions are concerned, it looks after itself apart from some 'moderating'. To build this in this requires time, so to release him to make the required developments, I will take over the existing site - but only sort of! Not having Lionel's expertise or experience, and being unable to use his program, it will not be as sophisticated, although hopefully be 'good enough'. At the moment there is less content although this will be added to, the moreso if you have favourite sites, articles, bloggers etc you can recommend. Do send the links!

We hope that Lionel can present his upgraded site in the not too distant future. We thank him for his past contribution and wishing him only a few headaches as he leads us, in the ether, onward and upward!

Steve Press

From the Chair:

I have scarcely met Lionel during my brief time with *Being Alongside*, but my ears have been ringing with members' praise of the concentrated and long term work he has put into nurturing the web site as the wider world's gateway into the work of the Project.

His ears must have been burning too!

Thanks a million, Lionel.

Jon Dean
Chair

From front page:

I was tickled when our nine year old, who was offloading about friendship issues, turned to me and said 'This is good practice for you isn't it?'

Some months ago our daughter Manon, who loves the recorder, was invited to join the school recorder club. She was so excited about it yet weeks passed by without her going. I couldn't understand why she didn't want to go - even when I tried to encourage her, she remained reticent. It wasn't until I carved out some listening time and, after some mirroring, asked the essence question that we got to the heart of the matter... It wasn't that she lacked confidence, or wasn't sure of the teacher, or didn't like being one of the youngest at recorder club (all merely MY assumptions), it was simply that she didn't like having to eat lunch with a much older year group in order to be ready in time for the start of recorder club. When I asked her what action she'd like to take, she said '*I'd like you to make me a packed lunch please*'. ***If only I had listened sooner.*** Needless to say she, and I, felt relieved and delighted that SHE had worked it out for herself. She's now a regular at recorder club and doesn't even want the packed lunch anymore!

We all need to be listened to. In our busy lives, we juggle constantly, put pressure on ourselves to be 'perfect', whilst struggling with conflicting pulls on our time and attention (be it work, house work, supporting the local school, the TV, radio or mobile phone). It makes me sad to think of children growing up in homes where they are not listened to. We must learn to listen, and practice what we preach. I am thankful that my parents responded to the **call to listen** as I was growing up. I want to do the same.

Natalie Savage

Natalie completed Acorn's 'Called to Listen' course at St Saviour's, Guildford. See also p15.

Please Note

As mentioned in last two issues, the National Committee has decided to cut the Newsletter issues from 6 a year to 4 to save on mailing and printing costs. This is the last issue of the old regime. The new regime begins with a December (Winter) issue, to be followed in March (Spring), June (Summer) and September (Autumn).

Copy deadline for December issue is 15 November.

Saying Like It Is

If you know someone who's depressed please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation, depression just is, like the weather.

Try to understand the blackness, lethargy, hopelessness and loneliness they're going through. Be there for them when they come through the otherside. It's hard to be a friend to someone who's depressed, but it is one of the kindest, noblest and best things you will ever do.



- Stephen Fry

St Marylebone Mental Health Support Group

meets at St Marylebone Church, 17 Marylebone Rd, NW1 5LT

on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month.

Welcoming Cuppa at 10.30am. Meeting 11 - 12.30

020 7935 5066

Battersea Befriending Network: from bright idea to lived reality

As I write this in mid-August, it is five years almost to the day since I met Pam Freeman and John Vallat for lunch at Centre Court, Wimbledon (the shopping complex, that is, not the hallowed tennis venue!) to discuss the possibility of setting up a befriending scheme in the London Borough of Wandsworth, similar to the long-standing scheme in neighbouring Merton in which my wife Helen and I had been befrienders for the previous five years.

The idea for such an enterprise had hit me about two months earlier – a bit like a mini “Eureka” moment, though I was in the shower at the time rather than in the bath – when two separate realities suddenly converged, with what later seemed inevitable logic. The first was a recent comment from mental health chaplain Richard Allen, when he was still Chair of APCMH Merton, that there was a real need in Wandsworth for a befriending service like Merton’s, if only someone could be found to take it on. The second was the imminent completion of my spare-time training as a “SPA” or Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary (a scheme run by the Anglican Diocese of Southwark to develop caring and pastoral work within local churches and/or the wider community) which required me to specify a caring project to which I would commit myself for the foreseeable future....

Perhaps if I had known then what a long, arduous and often frustrating process it would be to establish something like this from scratch – assembling an initial steering group able and willing to give of their time and talents; framing, with that group, aims, objectives, policies and a constitution that would turn us into a Committee; negotiating minefields like insurance and opening a bank account; recruiting suitable volunteers to train as befrienders; and, probably most difficult of all, getting ourselves known and accepted by the local Mental Health Trust and other statutory and voluntary bodies, to the point where its various care teams would start referring to us those suffering the social isolation which it was our aim to alleviate – then I might well have shrunk from the task as just too damn daunting.

However, thanks to incredible support from Richard Allen, who acted as my mentor from the start and as trainer for our first two training courses – from Father Anand, the priest of All Saints Battersea who allowed us to use his vicarage, then the church as the base for training >>>

(and has been part of the core group all along) – from Phillipe Cotgreave de Rahman, who in his formative three years as Chair used his networking skills and valuable experience in the South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust to really put us on the map there – from Ermias Alemu, who succeeded Phillipe as Chair last December and, with his Trust colleague Elicia Mollineau, now leads our training – from all our other dedicated Committee members and befrienders past and present – and of course thanks to the enormous support throughout, both moral and financial, from the BA National Committee – it is a great pleasure to report that Battersea Befriending Network, as it is now named, is at last a fully going concern, with 21 trained befrienders to date, of whom no less than 16 are in ongoing and successful befriending relationships. (The remaining five are either awaiting “matching” with suitable referrals from mental health care teams or are in the process of arranging with those teams their introductory meeting with the person they will be befriending.)

If I ever had any doubts along the way that the project was really worth all the hard work and occasional heartache, then two recent events well and truly laid them to rest. The first was the latest of our regular 2-monthly Support and Supervision Groups, on 25th July, when ten of the befrienders came together to report on how their befriending relationships were going and to discuss (in strictest confidence) any issues or problems they were facing.

To hear the stories of how potentially life-changing friendships were being forged, sometimes within a very short time, was heartening and thrilling enough. As it was also to witness the extraordinary wisdom displayed both by the insight into their own befriending relationships and their interactive response to questions raised by others. But more than that, the sense of commitment, deep caring and sheer *goodness* that simply shone through these volunteers was one of the most humbling experiences I can remember. Merely to have had the chance of meeting such people, let alone to have played a part in facilitating and channelling their wonderful resources into such a needy and worthy cause – in this day and age which is seen so often as superficial, cynical and crassly materialistic – is one huge privilege that I would not have missed for the world.

The second event, just three days later, was a picnic in Battersea Park. This was one of the twice-yearly social events which – like APCMH Merton before us – BBN sees as an important part of its service, not only as a “thank you” to the befrienders who give so generously of their time and energy throughout the year but as an opportunity for those they befriend to join in the party and experience friendship in a wider social setting that is nonetheless safe and accepting.

>>>

On this occasion, although the numbers were less than expected, with some finding their travel restricted because of the Olympics road race, it was a particular pleasure to welcome, of the 17 who attended, six "befriendees", all of whom expressed great enjoyment of the festivities.

I hope this potted account of a journey from bright idea to lived reality may provide some encouragement not only to those who have faithfully supported that idea from its inception, but to others out there to tap the resources of their own inspiration and the hidden goodness and altruism around us that the Olympics have recently brought to the surface.

Richard Trout

Befriending Co-ordinator Battersea Befriending Network, Aug 2012

Poem: To My Friends

*Love is with us constantly
Sometimes hidden, sometimes free.
If rejected never mind,
Go on loving - you'll find
Love is strong but passion weak.
Love lives long for it is meek.*

*If your loved one bounds away
He'll return another day.
Sometimes loving just the same
Ready for another game
'Til he sees that love divine
Leads him to your loving shrine.*

*- sometimes with a different face.
Walking with you, keeping pace
Then it is you'll know love's real,
Staying on an even keel,
Subject to a higher will -
Knowing God is with you still.*

June Roots



A sign of when Less is More - Confusion!

How many ways can you find to understand this image?

Here we have a lesson in how the fetish for brevity undermines accurate communication, and slipshod communication is one of life's greatest trouble makers.

Ask those who Tweet and Text....

save the date

the date 30th October

A Meditatio Seminar

Meditation and Addiction: The Way Through

Tuesday, 30th October 9.30am-5.00pm
24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD

Speakers

Fr Joe Pereira, founder of the Kripa Foundation, India:

How the spiritual dimension of meditation and yoga is essential to any recovery plan

Mike Sarson, founder of East-West Detox, Reading:

The need for forgiveness, meditation, healing and acceptance in recovery

Dr Vanessa Crawford, Consultant Addiction Psychiatrist, Shrewsbury:

Compassionate Boundaries - Managing addiction treatment in a changing NHS

Laurence Freeman, Benedictine monk and WCCM Director:

How meditation heals the divided self

Workshop

Linda Kaye and May Nicol:

Christian Meditation as an 11th step practice

To register your interest E: meditatio@wccm.org or M: 07980 581351

Full details of all the events will be published on the

Meditatio website: www.wccmmeditatio.org

Fr Joe Pereira will be leading Meditatio Workshops in the UK 25-29 October.
Mike Sarson & Nicholas Broadbridge OSB will lead a Meditatio Workshop on
Meditation and Healing in Recovery on Saturday 24 November 10-4 pm at
St Cassian's Centre, Wallingtons Road, Kintbury, Hungerford, Berks RG17 9SR



Outreach of
The World Community for Christian Meditation

meditatio

The Magnificent Seven:

Helps to Drive Off the Blues.

1. Think about something you love. Imagine how you would feel if you lost it. Now be happy you have it. Research shows savouring has powerful affects on well-being.
2. Take a nap. Studies show we can process negative thoughts just fine when we're exhausted -- but not the happy ones.
3. Smile. Happy or not, just smile. Studies show it can trick your mind into thinking you feel good. And it has plenty of other benefits.
4. Hug someone. Corny? Maybe. But it works.
5. Share the best event of your day with your romantic partner and have them do the same.
6. Work on a hard problem that makes you think. Studies show if your brain is dedicated to a mental chore, it can't bother you as much with distressing emotions.
7. Send someone a thank you email. Research shows gratitude is one of the most powerful keys to happiness.

The ubiquitous www.

Silver Celebration?

B.A. / apcmh has a special birthday to celebrate! This is to put out feelers as to what people might like the National Committee to do.

Maybe we could have a special edition of the Newsletter dedicated to 'Memories' and 'Movements'?

Or maybe people would appreciate a gathering which could be fun / social or alternatively, an opportunity to learn from a symposium of Top Guns in the field of Mental Health.

In the spirit of clarifying the past and anticipating the future, the National Committee are wanting to sort through old material to distil down to a respectable and manageable archive. Wish them luck?

Jon and Steve

Christian Listening.

Regulars will know that *Being Alongside* has been in conversation with Acorn Christian Healing Foundation (contact details: 01420 478121 / info@acornchristian.org / www.acornchristian.org / Whitehill Chase, Borden, Hants). Acorn are on the point of rolling out a training course concerned to help people 'listen' to those suffering from, and caring for, those with dementia. *Being Alongside* is pleased to have made a financial contribution to the course's development.

At least once in every person's life there is a need to tell our story and know that we have been heard.

Russ Parker

Director of Acorn Christian Healing Foundation

Christian Listeners is our unique resource for training people in listening attitudes and skills through a variety of courses. We aim to develop an understanding and practice of listening based on the example of Christ. *Christian Listening* is three dimensional: listening to others, listening to ourselves and listening to God. Listening to others improves the quality of relationships; learning to listen to ourselves helps us to grow in wholeness; learning to listen to God helps us to deepen our spirituality.

Courses range from 1 - 12 sessions. They are all interactive and value the life experience of participants. Introductory courses teach the importance of a listening attitude whilst more advanced courses give training in specific listening skills. We believe that good listening provides an excellent foundation for healing and health care. There are also listening training resources available for young people.

We are developing ***Listening to Dementia***, a course in two parts which provides an understanding of the impact of the condition. Part one looks at the difficult issues facing those caring for people with dementia and how we might respond appropriately. In part two the emphasis is on listening to a person with dementia, whose world is becoming increasingly confusing.

We are delighted that *Being Alongside* are supporting this important new initiative.

It is wonderful to have more Letters from the readership please! We want to know and share your thoughts and experiences. Contact via 19.

Letter 1: The Measure of a Man

I'm a Liberal Christian as I am a sinner yet believe a person's attributes should be judged by the sum total of their lives and not by single achievements; likewise their faults and shortcomings. If they are of equal measure, such is the finest quality of all, for it shows the person to be truly human and fallible. They are not afraid to make mistakes, which is the only way we truly learn right from wrong. What works and what doesn't, we can only try to discover.

And that, to me, is why we are here.

Richard Hughes

Letter 2: Job Slot? Not!

In my opinion, it is the job market and the impossible demands of employers that are to blame for current high youth unemployment, and indeed for all unemployment. I grew up in a time of full employment, when such high levels of previous experience were commonly not required. You took the job and were shown how to do it. I recently went to apply for a shelf-filling job only to find that previous 'shelf filling experience' was required. Hmm, is that not what we do after a visit to the supermarket?

As for people coming from families with long-term worklessness as the norm, that too is the fault of the job market and the economy. I am sick and tired of the assumption that the unemployed person is to blame for their condition when there is a job shortage.

I was mortified by the 'positive thinking' course I was recently forced to attend. The question of where the jobs are should precede the search for job support.

Furthermore, previous generations of youth have not had to compete with the over fifties and the disabled for jobs; groups that should rightly have their job-seeking obligations removed, at least until there are enough jobs to go round.

Jane C

Letter 3: I Like Meditation...

Reader Alan Sizer writes an appreciation of Jon and Suzanne's pieces from last issue and tells of how meditation in a Christian context has helped him, his wife and others.

I found Jon Dean's comment on collective experiences and Memories very interesting. My father always resisted my sharing of my Christian faith. Towards the end of his life he 'opened up' by saying "If there is a God, why did he let our friends die in the war?" I remember hearing the late Harry Patch, the last surviving soldier of World War 1, never spoke of that war until he was around 90 years of age. I also found Suzanne Heneghan's feedback on *A Meditatio* Seminar very informative.

I belong a local 'contemplative' prayer group here in Northampton and have found it and daily mediation helpful in obtaining insight and a measure of healing from a deep seated 'sense of rejection'. I commenced the discipline of Christian mediation after reading Richard Fosters book *The Celebration of Discipline* years ago but have found it helpful to read books by other writers such as Wilfrid Stinnison and Thomas Merton. Also the practice of praying with others more advanced in the meditation has been immensely helpful; as was a day at Turvey Abbey Bedfordshire where we practiced Lectio Divinia. A local Anglican church had a *Taste and See* day where workshops focused on different aspects of Christian Meditation. To show that it was not all for the 'mystics' but a commonly practiced classical discipline of the Church.

R. Foster's books on Prayer and Christian devotional life are immensely helpful to lay people like myself. He has a wonderful way of communicating Christian truths. My wife and I have found cd's by Margaret Rizza especially useful - *Silence of the Soul* communicates different approaches to Christian Mediation in a very 'user friendly' way. We got ours from www.eden.co.uk.

As part of my church's Prayer and Healing Team my wife and I have found Christian Meditation immensely helpful when trying to hear God in that ministry. We volunteer in a local ecumenical Street Church group working alongside 'street people' with alcohol dependency, substance abuse, post traumatic stress disorder and other situations; a way of *Being Alongside*.

Alan Sizer

Poem: Summer Suns

The prams circle the park
Like suns in an arc;
The new Mums are born
Happily on the lawn
By their dreams and fires,
Like a cosmos of wires
That change with the time
Perfectly in rhyme.

And these Summers say
That the suns will outweigh
The sorrow and the pain
With the gentleness of rain.
Life comes in marked metals
The rose has its petals
The exam is not too hard
The very senses scarred.

And ... if you last these suns
Till the word lifts up and runs
You too will circumnavigate
The pain, exchange for hate
And, sunbeams multiplied,
Watch our single sun outride.
Prayer forged in the heart
Will not blow the nebula apart

Daisies are white like snow drops
Like crowns with yellow tops
I hope you find the sun
Before the day's undone
And think only good of me
Set your budding moonshots free
Till we read between the lines
And intentions resurrect the signs.

Simon Partridge

Copy deadline for December issue is 15 November.

Poem: Friendship

*Friendship is a lovely thing
It can never be told
Friendship happy hours will bring
Worth their weight in gold.*

*And when dark clouds surround us
And everything goes wrong
Friendship, warm around us,
Will fill our day with song.*

Twinkle O'Sullivan

The Who & What of B.A.

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'Being Alongside' is the operational name for the 'Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health', (apcmh), a Christian based, voluntary association of individual members and affiliated groups who recognise the importance of spiritual values and support in mental health. It has a network of supporters throughout the United Kingdom and it welcomes and encourages people whatever their own faith or belief system. Governed by its National Committee, BA / apcmh is primarily concerned to promote and encourage "being alongside" people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

E&W Registered Charity: 1081642 UK Registered Company: 3957730

*Remember Summer Days -
They Will Return...*

