

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2008

President's Column

FORGIVENESS, GRACE, AND AFTNC

We'll be through with the holidays by the time you read this, but I'm inspired by the season. I actually do think it's a good thing to be kind, seek peace, and to give to others especially at this time of year, and surely to be mindful of these things during the other eleven months. It's encouraging that everyone now knows of Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Solstice and Ramadan (September) besides Christmas, and I've been privileged to celebrate other traditions with friends at various times. All of the major religions encourage grace, forgiveness, and finding our own special grace during these holidays, and in different ways.

I've been reading the book *Amish Grace* (Kraybill, Nolt, & Weaver-Zercher, 2007) about the 2006 shooting of six young girls in a one room schoolhouse and its aftermath in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where I grew up. Known as rather stern, purist people, the Amish families of the girls who were killed actually attended the funeral of the murderer who lived nearby, and took up a



Terry Patterson,
AFTNC President

collection and visited his family to express their sadness and forgiveness for the murderer. Other cultures, while reaching out, may meet with the murderer of a family member but say they can never really forgive, a more moderated form of grace. We know that everlasting resentment and revenge are both personally and socially destructive. More and more as therapists, we

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aftnc
THE ASSOCIATION OF
FAMILY THERAPISTS OF
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

EDITOR'S COLUMN

As another new year begins, it often seems we are bombarded by news of tragedy, disaster, or hard times. That's why I am pleased this issue of the Newsletter reflects the growth happening at AFTNC and the articles remind us that even during periods of darkness or tragedy, phenomenal strength and transformation can occur. I hope you enjoy this issue's articles with their focus on resiliency. Both Terry Patterson's Column, "Forgiveness, Grace, & AFTNC" (p. 1), and Ellen Pulleyblank Coffey's article, "How to be Prepared: The Work of Stories" (pp. 6-9), speak to me of redemption and, not only our ability to survive when tragedy



Michelle E Mason
AFTNC Newsletter Editor
with Taiga Lore

strikes, but our amazing ability to heal and grow. As an organization, AFTNC continues refining itself and working towards completion of the upgrades that have been undertaken in the past year. As you can see on pages 3 & 4, the Program Committee has been hard at work lining up some wonderful, monthly speaker events. Well done, to the team of people working to upgrade AFTNC's website and the Video Library (p. 3). Finally, be sure to read Linda Klann's Review of the 2007 Annual Conference, "Family Therapy: A weekend with Eliana Gil" (pp. 9- 10). It will

remind those that attended of Eliana's warmth and experiential teaching style and the richness of reconnecting with our peers in this setting, and, hopefully, pique the interest of those considering attendance at this year's conference (see announcement this page).

Please feel free to contact me with any ideas or suggestions. If you have reactions to articles you've read which you'd like our members to hear, please submit a Letter to the Editor via mail or email: mmasonphd@comcast.net. Also, if you have an area of expertise or interest and would like to submit an article for consideration, I would love to hear from you.

Michelle E. Mason, PhD, is a Research Fellow at the Rockway Institute for LGBT Research and Public Policy, and Postdoctoral Resident in the Chemical Dependency Department at Kaiser Permanente, Union City, CA.

Save the Date

AFTNC 2008 Annual Conference

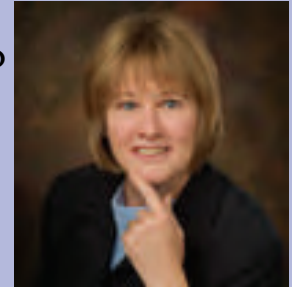
Presenter

Valerie Whiffen, PhD

Author of

Secret Sadness:

*The hidden relationship patterns
that make women depressed*



**Saturday & Sunday,
November 2nd & 3rd
at Westerbeke Ranch, Sonoma**

Valerie E. Whiffen, Ph.D., has been a professor and clinical psychologist in private practice since 1988 in Canada. She is professor of psychology at the University of Ottawa, where she teaches students to do interpersonal therapy with depressed women and therapy with couples who are struggling with one partner's depression. She serves as a peer reviewer for several professional psychological journals. Whiffen has authored numerous chapters in professional books and more than forty journal articles. She is coauthor of *Attachment Processes in Couple and Family Therapy* with Susan Johnson. Her primary research interests are gender and depression. She is currently engaged in a long-term study examining the interpersonal influences on girls and women's depression.

***For more information on the Conference,
you may contact***

Sara Mizban at saramizban@yahoo.com
Linda Klann at Linda_Klann@hotmail.com
Polly Lytle at lytlephd@sbcglobal.net

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AFTNC'S NEW WEBSITE

Check out the amazing transformation of AFTNC's Website at www.aftnc.com

While certain features continue to be under construction, especially the Find a Therapist feature and Member Updates, the sections on Member News, Upcoming Member Events, the Video Library, and Newsletter Archives have been improved and are working beautifully. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the team of people who have worked for months on this complex project: especially Jay Seiff-Haron and graphic designer Hizam Haron. Kudos also to Zachary Berke, Terence Patterson, Roger Lake, Ron Pilato, and Shawn Giammattei. Look for upcoming announcements on the Listserve as new features become available. Your patience is appreciated as we continue to refine the site.

VIDEO LIBRARY UPGRADE

Change also continues with our Video Library as we start 2008. Betty Wallace has come on board as our new Video Librarian. Our warmest thanks go out to Mary Coombs for her years of hard work as the previous librarian. The work she and Keith Sutton did to upgrade the library to DVD format will be appreciated for years to come. Information regarding our selection of wonderful videos is available at the AFTNC website (www.aftnc.com). If you are interested in checking-out a video by mail, please contact Betty at betty_wallace@sbcglobal.net.

MENTOR PROGRAM

The next Mentor Program Check-In will be held on **January 26th at Alliant International University** in conjunction with the AFTNC Speaker Event "West Meets East" (see announcement this page; time TBA).

The AFTNC Mentor Program matches practitioners in the field with family therapy students from graduate schools in the Bay Area. If you are interested in becoming a mentor or mentee, contact Lara Ezrin at (415) 377-5629, larah43@hotmail.com.

AFTNC EVENT

Saturday, January 26th , 12pm - 2pm

West Meets East: Family Therapy with Asian Families

presenters

MARY CRONIN, MFT,
PHILIP TSUI, LCSW, PSYD,
JENNIE HUA, MFT

Immigration, acculturation, and generational issues will be explored in this program that will feature a panel experienced in the field of cross-cultural family therapy. The panel will be open to questions and discussion following their presentations.

Cost: Free

Location: Alliant International University-San Francisco Campus, One Beach Street, across from Pier 39

RSVP with Keith Sutton at drkeith@drkeithsutton.com

AFTNC EVENT

Friday, March 7th , 6:30 - 9pm

Courage After Fire: Family Therapy with the New Generation of Veterans

presenter

KEITH ARMSTRONG, LCSW

Will discuss his work with the veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom and their families at the VA in San Francisco. He will cover the special needs specific to this population, discuss relevant research, common presentations in treatment, and treatment interventions.

Cost: Free

Location: Kentfield, CA

RSVP with Keith Sutton at drkeith@drkeithsutton.com

FORGIVENESS, GRACE, AND AFTNC

(Continued from page 1)

are called upon to come to terms with our own attitudes about victimization of all sorts in the process of helping our clients heal.

When it comes to giving, I take my cues from Rev. Billy (2006; Bill Talen, SF/NY comedian and performance artist). Besides being courageous and being arrested 50 times for taking on Disney, Wal-Mart, and others, he is a clear-eyed observer of what consumerism does to us personally and as a society. I won't preach the way only he can, but the holidays and the New Year are times for us to take a fresh look at how marketing, cheap imported goods, and rampant buying distract us from mindful attention to the beauty of life and our relationships with others. His *Church of Stop Shopping Now* is inspiration for each of us. We have all experienced how we treasure gifts most when they are personal, interactive, chosen or made with knowledge of the person, and are less likely to be vacuum sealed in plastic. This notion goes well with the renewed emphasis in our field on attention to the spiritual dimensions of the whole person.

As a social learning-based clinician, I have always believed that we need to be examples for our clients in the major areas of life. Whether it relates to our own patterns of giving and receiving, forgiveness, or restitution, our attitudes and behaviors become evident in how we carry out our work and everyday lives. By exemplifying grace in how we meet, assess, and treat people, or even deal with business arrangements, we reflect a generous attitude, which can be a healing

factor in itself. We can learn not only from the Amish, but also from other collectivist cultures what it really means to step outside of our individual interests and exhibit the type of *social interest* that Alfred Adler (1964) said was essential to mental health. As for myself, I'm delighted to be living in this age (along with all of its frightful aspects) which offers exposure to so many cultures that enrich our own traditions, and we can celebrate and enjoy them.

As for AFTNC, I belong because of the friendliness, concern for others, desire for self improvement, and simple way of operating that we share. We have such a high caliber of students and new and seasoned professionals that they embarrass the rest of us with their initiative and competence. Michelle Mason continues to dazzle us with the professionalism of the newsletter. Coming off a highly successful annual conference in September (kudos to Sara Mizban and Polly Lytle), we have another exciting year planned, with the next conference set for Sonoma in the Fall. We also have a noteworthy schedule lined up with powerful presentations this Spring, thanks to Keith Sutton. Additionally, AFTNC will continue its active mentoring program, thanks to Lara Ezrin.

AND, I hope you have been able to view our updated web site that was recently launched. It was generously developed by our stellar creative member team of Jay Seiff-Haron and graphic designer Hizam Haron. Thanks for their diligent and detailed contributions to keep us "in the know." I hope everyone will take advantage of the therapist referral resource on the site and develop a profile of your practice

with a beautiful photo that will be available for the world to access. Other professional associations I belong to charge \$75-\$200 in additional fees for this service. We will be refining this site over the coming months, and welcome your suggestions. It will also replace the need for filling up your inbox with referral requests, which can be handled efficiently with the new search tool.

So forgive, give, receive, enjoy, and find your own grace throughout the year, and I hope to join you in AFTNC activities as part of this exercise. Peace to you all in the year to come.

References

- Adler, A. (1964). *Social Interest. A challenge to man kind*. New York: Capricorn. (Original work published 1938)
- Kraybill, D.B., Nolt, S.M., & Weaver-Zercher, D. (2007). *Amish grace*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Reverend Billy (2006). *What would Jesus Buy?* New York: Public Affairs (Perseus Books Group).

AFTNC EVENT

APRIL 4, 7-9:30PM

COLLABORATIVE COUPLES THERAPY: STARTING OUT FROM DIFFERENT PLACES & ENDING UP AT THE SAME POINT

Presenters

DAN WILE, PH.D.
TERRY PATTERSON, ED.D.

Cost: Free

Location: Alliant International University-San Francisco Campus

RSVP at drkeith@drkeithsutton.com

HOW TO BE PREPARED: THE WORK OF STORIES

THIS MATERIAL IS COMPILED FROM *BLOWING ON EMBERS: STORIES FOR HARD TIMES*, PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2007, LLUMINA PRESS

BY ELLEN PULLEYBLANK COFFEY



Ellen Pulleyblank Coffey, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and an author. She lives and works in Berkeley, California. She is known for her work with families and communities facing major upheavals. She is a member of the Kosovar Family Professional Education Collaboration developing mental health services in Kosovo, Co-Chair of Human Rights for the American Family Therapy Academy and a member of a participatory research group looking at best practices following disasters. To learn more about her visit her web site at: www.Berkeleyfamilytherapy.com

WE LIVE IN A WORLD in which we are bombarded by news of disaster. We wonder how we might survive after losing a loved one in 9/11 or after a hurricane like Katrina. We want to help others, but we often avert our eyes after the first shock of a disaster has passed, overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems.

But we can learn to face hard times from the stories of others by using what they tell us to strengthen our own stories of survival. The stories we know best—our often-repeated stories—can limit us when we are in frightening circumstances, and expanding where we find stories of adversity opens new options. It is by reflecting on the unfamiliar stories of others that we can re-examine our beliefs that life must be lived in familiar ways. We can search for stories about our families, the world, and ourselves that offer us unexpected possibilities for response to extreme events.

Our “known” stories come to us in powerful ways. Changing these stories is not easy, but the stories of others can provide a road map through life’s most difficult moments. The stories of six women from different cultures in *Blowing on Embers: Stories for Hard Times* (2007, Pulleyblank Coffey) offer us some of the possible pathways through crisis, struggle and renewal—the phases of disaster.

I am a family therapist who for many years encouraged couples and families in trouble to search for stories on the edges of

their memories or imagination. I knew that stories, forgotten or never told, held answers to difficult questions. I did this with others, but I didn’t know how to do this for myself when personal tragedy struck. My family stories had been prescriptions for how to avoid disaster, but they turned out to offer me little help in hard times.

I grew up in a protective bubble. Distress and financial strain were not spoken about and any difficulties in our history were only hinted at in family stories. Living with my mother, father, and older sister in our fourth-floor apartment in Jersey City, I was shielded from difficulties and dangers.

We were a middle-class, secular-Jewish family with all the necessities of life and a few of the luxuries. I roamed from apartment to apartment, biked the city streets, and played on building rooftops with other neighborhood children without fear. For me, Jersey City was a place in which I had everything I wanted, and I was free to do whatever I imagined possible.

In spite of what I believed during the day, I had night terrors as a child. I dreamed that my father had died and that we had nowhere to go. I woke up screaming, and one of my parents came into my room and slept with me for comfort. They assumed that it was their responsibility to soothe me. No one spoke to me about my fears—where they came from or how I might face them.

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ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

HOW TO BE PREPARED: THE WORK OF STORIES

COMPILED FROM *BLOWING ON EMBERS: STORIES FOR HARD TIMES*

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Since life's disasters were kept hidden, after I married and had two children, I believed that I could make choices that would keep my family and me safe. As a therapist, I studied a psychology that taught me to believe in personal responsibility and free will. I had faith in human beings' capacity to take care of one another and make changes when they had to. I took this belief forward into my life and into my work.

My life of good fortune ended when my husband, Ron, was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease), a progressive neurological disease with no known cause or treatment that paralyzes the muscles in the body and leads to death. Ron lived at home on a ventilator for seven years until he decided to turn the ventilator off and die.

Years after Ron's death, when I had remarried and my life was once again stable, I lacked confidence in my ability to face hardship. I tended to watch over my second husband as he slept, making sure that he was breathing, and to overreact when my adult children were out of contact for what seemed to me to be too long. I still didn't have a coherent survival story, and I was still bound by fear.

It wasn't until I worked in Kosovo, following the war there, that I again became hopeful about our human capacity to live through hard times. I was in Kosovo as part of a United States team working with Kosovar mental health professionals who were developing their mental health system. Our team met many who had faced the horrors of the war, but one woman, Zepa, stood out from the rest. It was she who led me to want to know more about what it takes to construct personal stories that help us stand up against hard times.

Zepa lives in a small village not far from Pristina, the major city in Kosovo. She is in her early seventies. The day we first drove into her town, was cold and grey. Zepa's young grandson was watching for our arrival, and he took us down a dirt path to their small house. Barnyard animals ran around, and we had to get through the mud to reach the front door where Zepa and her family were waiting to greet us. Following their lead we took off our shoes before going inside to a room saved for visitors. The room was decorated with colored rugs and cushions. Before being seated, each family member shook our hands twice, as was their custom. At future meetings, Zepa would reach out and take us into her embrace, but that day she looked worn and tired. She formally shook our hands and

asked us to be seated.

Their story of war began in the spring of 1999, when two Serbs from a neighboring village arrived to tell people that their village would be occupied by Serb forces the next day. They said that the soldiers were looking only for Kosovar soldiers, and the villagers need not be afraid. But the next day, the Serbs executed nineteen men in front of their families and executed six more the day after that. They burned seventy-two homes.

Serbian soldiers came to Zepa's home and ordered the women in the household out into the yard and the men into the barnyard. The soldiers were masked, but Zepa and her family knew some of them as their neighbors. The women heard the shots as the soldiers murdered Zepa's husband, two sons, and two grandsons. The soldiers then told Zepa to leave her house, promising they would return the next day and burn it down. She refused and told them that they would have to burn her and her daughter too because she would never leave their home. When they returned the next day, she stood defiantly in her doorway. The soldiers left the house alone.

This first visit with our U.S.-Kosovar team to Zepa's family was only eight months after the family had witnessed the murder of Zepa's husband, two of her sons, and two grandsons by Serbian soldiers. Eleven family members lived in the household: Zepa, her daughter who is schizophrenic, one adult son who had returned from Germany to help the family after the murders, two daughters-in-law whose husbands had been murdered, and six children of the daughters-in-law, who ranged in age from eighteen months to twelve years old.

The family lived without indoor plumbing or enough room for all of the family members. Yet, in grief and with few resources, they were proud and welcoming. At our first meeting, Zepa, with clenched fists, told us of her outrage as if her pain would never stop. She still feared that the soldiers would return any day. Her daughters-in-law didn't speak or look at us directly as they served us drinks and cake. I cried as Zepa cried during that first session, not able to imagine how they would ever find a way out of their pain. There were also many unanswered questions about how these women would get along with one another and reorganize the household now that Zepa's sons were no longer alive.

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HOW TO BE PREPARED: THE WORK OF STORIES

COMPILED FROM *BLOWING ON EMBERS: STORIES FOR HARD TIMES*

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Some months later, we returned to Zepa's household. This time, not only did the adults greet us, but the older children of one of the daughters-in-law also joined us in the interview. Clearly something had changed in the family. One of the daughters-in-law had begun to work outside the house. Both young mothers spoke of their children's successes at school. Although still angry, Zepa was more focused on what the family needed to do to survive. She was able to smile occasionally in the midst of her continued expressions of anger, grief, and fear of the Serbs. She said that the mental-health team had brought the family a new sense of hope by helping them to speak to each other, first of their grief and then of the immediate problems that they had to solve. In those conversations, Zepa had assumed leadership of the household, a household that had previously been organized around the men as heads of the household. She had broken the traditional rules of male leadership, since those rules no longer served the family, while at the same time holding fast to traditional values whenever possible.

My third visit with Zepa and her family was immediately after the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. When we arrived at her house, Zepa enfolded us into her arms, comforting us and letting us know that she grieved for us and understood our sorrow. In this moment, it was she who was taking care of us. In this visit and in subsequent visits, the family focused less on their past and more on the present and their hopes for the future, especially the future of the children. Zepa's grandson read us a poem he had written in school, in which he said that when he grew up he would be a Kosovar soldier, but that Serbian mothers should not be afraid because he wouldn't harm them.

In four years, with Zepa's guidance, the family rebuilt their family life. Although they still grieved, they were again active at home and in their community. Zepa was an inspiration to her family, to the mental-health team, and to the other villagers. I left Kosovo impressed with Zepa's resourcefulness, but with no opportunity to sit with her and find out more about what made it possible for her to move from grief to action on behalf of herself and her family in only four years. Language, distance, and time stood in our way.

When I returned to the United States wanting to learn how people like Zepa survived and thrived, I interviewed a few

women I already knew who had endured suffering. I was curious about how they described their life situations, the resources that came to them from their family circumstances, and how they understood the dilemmas that they had faced. Other women who had faced tragedy, whom I hadn't known before, began to show up in my life. Perhaps it was coincidence, or perhaps I was just noticing them because of my experience with Zepa.

I listened closely and recorded the women's stories, hoping not to freeze in fear the next time I was dealt an overwhelming blow by fate. But, I discovered that in order to learn from others' stories, I had to re-examine my basic assumptions about life—to challenge what I had always believed to be true. Only then could the stories of others provide a guide for my own new stories.

I discovered that the element of time—past, present, and future—was important to my understanding of where the women I interviewed found the resources that they relied upon when most distressed. I named the women *Keepers*, *Seekers*, or *Teachers*, depending upon where in time they found stories that helped them when life became most difficult.

Keepers reach back into family history when they need to reset their course. Family traditions guide them as they provide a nurturing presence for three or more family generations. They find their center in family life. Through their stories and memories, they deepen and maintain family connections. When recounting hard times, they retell family stories and report on present-day family life, even including family members from whom they are estranged.

Each of us can choose what we will take from the Keepers in our lives. Perhaps mapping three generations of our family might lead us to family stories that we have forgotten. Keepers may remind us of times at the dinner table when we heard stories of family pride. They might encourage us to tell our family stories and to use them as our guides. Keepers might encourage us to look outside of family to find others to stand with us when we are afraid. They also challenge us to seek a world of spirit, even if we do not have a traditional religious path to follow.

Seekers live in a world of frequent change. They live away

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HOW TO BE PREPARED...

COMPILED FROM *BLOWING ON EMBERS*

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from their families of origin, feeling confined by family expectations. They focus on the present and search across age groups and cultural communities to find alternatives that strengthen their sense of independence. Some of us prepare to become Seekers when we are young. Others of us have to learn to let go in later life. Many of us hold on too long to the notion that we can fix the lives of those we love or control the parts of our lives that are not in our hands. Seekers encourage us to take up what we can and to let go of what we must.

Teachers believe that their lives are connected to the lives of other people in the world who suffer from loss or who live under oppression. Although the Teachers have pain or danger in their own lives, they move through their personal struggles by acting with others in mind with a hope for a better future. Their stories articulate their principles of social action and political justice. They aren't deterred from working in difficult situations by personal or political obstacles. They call out to us to join them in their work.

Although some people choose one pathway over another, as listeners we can select elements from any of the stories we hear and integrate them into our ways of coping. Our work is to build upon these stories to find coherent survival stories for ourselves, so that we prepare for what may lie ahead; but, since we wish to forget hardship, we go on not taking stories for the future. We forget that suffering cannot be avoided, and that when others suffer, it affects us. In our own good times, we turn away from the hardships of others, even though the people that we turn away from are the people who hold the stories that we may need later.

The work of constructing coherent survival narratives on which we can rely is an active process that takes practice. We need to approach situations that we fear, to reach beyond our comfort, and to take actions that strengthen our resourcefulness; and, most important of all, we must listen and learn from the stories of the people closest to hard times in order to be prepared for what we will need in the future.

Source:

Pulleyblank Coffey, E. (2007). Blowing on embers: Stories for hard times. Tamarac: Llumina Press.

Ellen Pulleyblank Coffey Ph.D is a clinical psychologist with a family therapy and community practice in Berkeley, California.

A REVIEW OF AFTNC'S 2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FAMILY PLAY THERAPY:

A WEEKEND WITH ELIANA GIL, PHD

BY LINDA KLANN

Conferences or workshops tend to nurture me professionally in a few different ways. The first is by learning new techniques or therapeutic approaches I can directly utilize in my practice. The second is by inspiring me to develop a new way of doing something that expands upon my already existing therapeutic style. And the third is through the connections I make with other professionals that support and inspire me. I can honestly say I got all these from the Eliana Gil Conference.



Linda Klann

Westerbeke Ranch, Sonoma, set the stage for this year's AFTNC Annual Conference. The community formed for the weekend underscored the different but important work we each do in a myriad of ways. Through eating good food, talking about ideas or one's individual work, playing charades and going for walks we were able to interact with one another in a dynamic way that enriched our own practices, as well as established and maintained social and professional links. This setting and the related connections it engendered set the stage for an interactive and stimulating presentation by Eliana Gil.

Much of Eliana's work is based upon activities that engage the left brain, letting it speak without the censure of the "rational" right brain. It is in the left brain that stories and symbols which form our metaphoric lives lay, and it is thought that by engaging these a more immediate way of processing therapeutic work is activated. By utilizing metaphor or play in a therapeutic context the "injury" or trauma is readily externalized, in turn allowing it to be explored, shifted, and eventually healed without necessarily directly discussing an "event." Children's lives already revolve around metaphor through the use of play; therefore, this therapeutic approach is especially effective with both children and their families.

With this in mind, Eliana focused the conference upon exploring the many creative ways one can engage the left brain in therapy. She began the conference with an experiential activity, having each person create a Play Genogram. I can readily

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HOW TO BE PREPARED: THE WORK OF STORIES

COMPILED FROM *BLOWING ON EMBERS: STORIES FOR HARD TIMES*

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admit that I felt some resistance to doing this: "you must be kidding; as a child therapist I already do this; just show/tell me the technique..." you get the picture. In pushing through the resistance however, I found I enjoyed and got a great deal from the activity.

It took me a few minutes to begin appreciating the Play Genogram activity. Unless someone already works with expressive arts, it can be challenging to incorporate such activities into one's practice. I began to realize that how comfortable I am with doing an activity, directly impacts whether or not it will be incorporated into my therapeutic work. Pushing past the resistance, with this and other activities throughout the weekend, also allowed me to debunk the myth that one needs to be "artistic" or an "artist" to utilize these techniques. To push past the resistance, I needed to face some of my own shame about what is created: fear that it will be judged as ugly, stupid, not good enough, etc. I realized that in some ways it is much easier to solely utilize words in therapy, for they fade with memory; visuals remain to be examined and explored indefinitely.

Eliana also underscored the importance of the use of metaphor. In therapy, metaphor can act as a "buffer" to hold traumatic material without losing its essence. It is an alternative way to work with memories that are too intense or painful to talk about – for both therapist and client. With some clients, the way they work with metaphor seems to change as they grow: being more comfortable with verbal or narrative metaphors as adults, versus the metaphoric use of play and art as children. Eliana challenged us to creatively explore and expand upon how we use metaphor in therapy, pushing the envelope of our own comfort zones to create new ways of engaging with elusive or difficult material.

Another important focus of the conference was how Eliana used various activities to keep family issues and dynamics a part, if not "the" focus of therapy. In her paradigm, the therapist stands to the side and acts as a guide that helps hold the focus on an individual *in* a family system. This is done even during individual sessions through the incorporation of various family drawings, play genograms, sand trays involving family themes, etc.

Eliana's work also acts to remind us of the beauty of trusting the unconscious and un-named process. As therapists we do

not always need to name the obvious; like the story of the boy who saw one brother kill his other brother, sometimes techniques as simple as patience and witnessing can create a safe space where profound work can be done in the client's own way and at their own pace.

Coming away from the Family Play Therapy Conference, I found that I had gained a great deal. On a social level, I had met, connected with and was supported by a number of people who shared similar values and beliefs about the work we do. Professionally, I came away with activities that I have directly utilized in my practice, as well as some activities that I have created using ideas from the conference as a launching pad. Overall it was an interesting and stimulating weekend; I look forward to seeing everyone again at next year's conference.

Linda Klann, MFT is in private practice in San Francisco.

MAY 2008 AFTNC EVENT

DATE AND TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED

Making Better Men: Family therapy and masculinity

Presenter

ROGER LAKE, MFT,

Roger Lake, MFT and AFTNC past president, will lead a panel of AFTNC members in conversation about men in couples and family therapy. The conversation will explore personal and clinical issues relevant to our contemporary understanding of attachment and emotion in working with men. The panel will reflect diversity and varying degrees of clinical experience, as we attempt to understand our own development as "better men," and strive to be accountable in our own work.

Come prepared to ask questions.

Cost: Free Location: TBA

RSVP with Keith Sutton at drkeith@drkeithsutton.com

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.AFTNC.COM

WHO WE ARE

Founded in the early 1960's, AFTNC is the nation's oldest professional association devoted to promoting family therapy. Our goal is to advance the theory and practice of family therapy while fostering collegial relationships among family therapists. AFTNC is a group of experienced mental health and social service professionals committed to providing quality services to families, couples, and individuals in private and public settings. Our multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural membership includes MFTs, PhDs, PsyDs, MDs, LCSWs and advanced graduate students.

RAM GOKUL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

PROVIDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR AFTNC'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Ram Gokul memorial scholarship fund was established by the AFTNC council in 2006. For the past several years, the council has worked to incorporate cultural perspectives into the training and practice of family therapy in our region. We have attempted to put these issues at the top of our agenda, particularly in

choosing presenters for the Fall Conference. Ram, our friend and colleague, was an inspiration to many of us in that regard. Having come to the United States from Guyana as a young man, he trained in the Bay Area at a time when few men of color were entering our field. His life and work embodied respect for cultural

diversity. When he passed away last summer, we were all caught by surprise, and sought to memorialize his life and promote our interest in culturally sensitive mental health services by establishing a scholarship in his name to support the goal of broadening participation in our Fall Conference, thereby creating a

more respectful community of understanding and justice.

*AFTNC 's
2008 Conference*

Nov 2nd & 3rd

presenter

Valerie Whiffen, PhD

*Author of
"A Secret Sadness"*