

TAPESTRIES

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In our work with youth, there are special moments of connection where our understanding, sensitivity and helping potential release us. Drawn by the other person's developmental readiness and the demands of the moment, an opportunity emerges for heightened relationship and communication. This is when we are at our best as CYCs.

Tapestries is dedicated to the telling and retelling of the stories that describe the 'soul' of child and youth work practice, stories that exemplify the merging of CYC art, technique...and 'soul'.

Readers are encouraged to contribute stories for publication by contacting Varda Mann-Feder at the address listed inside the front cover.

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TREES ARE LIKE PEOPLE

Brian and I were walking in the park one day. I had been Brian's CYC for some months, now. During our time together I had come to realize how alienated and alone Brian felt. He often spoke to me of feeling that the early experiences in his life had left him ugly, unlovable and beyond repair.

Today, we walked among the majestic trees on the trail dappled by the ever-changing patterns of light made by the gentle wind upon the tree leaves. We walked aimlessly, enjoying each other's company. We talked of baseball games, of music we both enjoyed, and of Brian's wish, one day, to be reunited with his family.

We came upon a clearing with a small stone bench. I sat on the bench while Brian lay down on a grassy mound.

"Brian, have you ever noticed how trees are?" I asked.

"Sure, hasn't everyone?" he replied.

"Ever noticed how trees are like people?" I continued.

"No they aren't," rebutted my young friend, "trees aren't at all like people!"

I swept my hand in an arc indicating the trees around us and said,

"Look at all these trees. Are any two exactly the same?"

"No," he replied.

"And what makes them different?" I asked.

He puzzled for a moment and replied, "Some are oak. Some are pine. And some of them, I don't really know what kind they are."

"Right you are," I said, "and what else do you notice?"

"Well, some are tall and some are short. Some with piney branches, others with broad fingery leaves."

"Yes, I see that also. Now notice something else." I pointed to an oak tree that was noticeably bent and distorted. "What do you notice about that tree?"

Brian considered the tree for a moment and replied, "Looks like it might have been struck by lightning or maybe broken apart in a storm long ago."

"Notice how the tree responded," I said, "that bent trunk will always be there as a reminder of something that happened to the tree. The tree will always be marked by the event in the tree's life. That tree was probably very young when its trunk was bent. But it has continued to grow these many years. Does that tree seem ugly to you, Brian?"

"No," replied Brian, "not really."

"It's simply different and unique, isn't it? Notice that none of the trees are exactly alike," I continued, "No pine is exactly like any other pine. No oak exactly like any other oak. Each is changed by the events of its life; the place that it grows, the trees that surround it, the good years, the bad years. Just like people. We all are marked by the events of our lives. It seems to make each of us more unique and valuable for there is no other exactly like us."

We sat quietly for a long time. Neither of us speaking, listening to the wind whispering through the leaves, Brian pensively inspecting the trees.

Eventually we continued our walk through the woods--each of us taking something away: Brian, a new awareness of his own uniqueness and value; me, an affirmed sense of myself as a child care worker and person. I doubt if either one of us will ever forget that day.