

VOICES NEWSLETTER



Community Colleges of Spokane

Institute for Extended Learning

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Reflective Practice and “Those People”

“Those people.” This small phrase has a powerful impact on how we think about and act towards others. This small phrase quickly defines others as not us and as different. It creates a dangerous dichotomy in which we separate ourselves from an entire group of people, often without fully understanding why.

So, who are “those people?” They are individuals who are not as smart, clean, articulate, compassionate, educated or successful as we are, or in any way similar to us. Not only do you know who “those people” are but every-

one you know also knows them. In essence, they are different from you, don’t share your values, and if they would just do things your way, they would be better off.

Unfortunately, these attitudes can prevent us from genuinely seeing and hearing the experiences of people who are different from us. This simple phrase allows us to escape all responsibility for having to reach out to people and, at times, is used to help us separate ourselves from our students.

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Running on (Beyond) Empty By Grace ESM Leaf

“If it isn’t one thing, it’s another,” I hear my students say.

And they’re not talking about just a bad day. Many at CCS face more than one major life crisis at a time. Our students come to us with a tangled

web of stressors strapped to their backs.

One New Zealand study calls them “life shocks”:

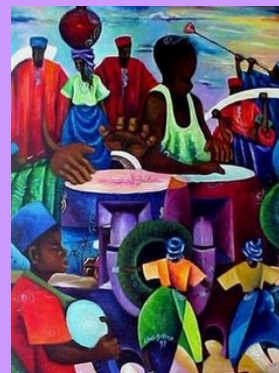
- Marriage or relationship break-up
- Forced sale of house

- Unexpected and substantial drop in income
- Eviction
- Bankruptcy
- Substantial financial loss

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Running on (Beyond) Empty, continued

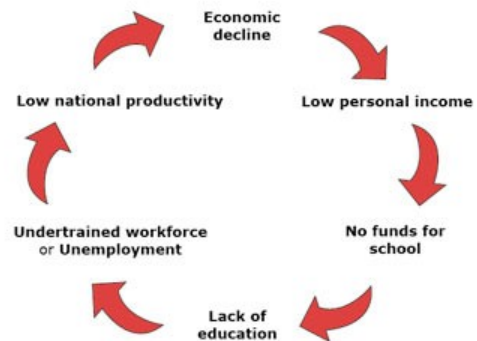
- Redundancy (being laid off from a job)
- Becoming a sole parent
- Three months or more unemployed
- Major damage to home
- House burgled
- Victim of violence
- Incarceration
- A noncustodial sentence (community service or fines, but not imprisonment)
- Illness lasting three weeks or more
- Major injury or health problem
- Unplanned pregnancy and birth of a child

How many students do you know who are facing these hardships? How many are you facing, and in what way can you relate to our students' sense of overload? What amazes me is how our students can bear not just one but many of these burdens and still manage to come to school, work, care for their families and return the next day.

Other times I see students who break down after what seems to the outsider the slightest misstep at school, like a parking ticket or "helpful" feedback on a paper. What sets them off? According to the research, people can handle up to seven life disruptors. The tipping point for most people seems to be eight. So when a student says, "I have a quick question," and it's ostensibly about one of their problems, this study reminds us that we need to be mindful that they face more than meets the eye before we can truly help the student.

The seemingly simple act of picking out classes, for example, can sometimes take an hour because a student needs help solving a whole host of related problems that will allow the student to actually get to class in the first place. Physician Richard Swensen calls us to recognize that we serve those in "negative margin" emotionally, spiritually, financially and physically every day.

Breaking the cycle of poverty through education is our core mission and our daily practice. As stressed as we are, with more students to serve and fewer people with which to do it, your intentional work softens the blow of each life shock for students. Your mindful caring makes a difference.



The **cycle of poverty** has been described as a phenomenon where poor families become trapped in poverty for generations because they have no or limited access to critical resources, such as education and financial services, so subsequent generations are also impoverished. The IEL is one part of the

Diversity Activity: Creating Healthy Communities

Purpose: To develop an understanding of how healthy communities can be made

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Large paper, mural paper, pens, markers, old magazines and three signs with one of the following words on each sign: agree, disagree and maybe.

Procedure:

1. Begin a discussion by asking, “What defines community? What is community for you?” Write the ideas on a large piece of paper where everyone can see it.
2. Brainstorm ideas on what makes a healthy community. Write the ideas on a large piece of paper where everyone can see it.
3. Ask participants to look at the ideas they have generated and instruct them to draw their ideas on the large mural paper. Participants can use the magazines to complement their drawings and words. Let people continue to talk during this time and see what ideas emerge from the conversation. Participants are in the process of drawing their ideal community.
4. Ask students to free write based on the sentence, “In order for our community to stay healthy, we need _____.” They can also write from the following prompt, “In order to create a healthy community, I can _____.”
5. Have the agree, disagree and maybe signs posted on a wall. Using the ideas created in the discussion, generate some summary statements, such as “To create a healthy community, you need a strong democratic government.” After you read a statement, ask participants to stand under the sign that most represents their beliefs about the statement. Have them discuss their opinions. Do about five or six of these types of statements.
6. Write down any issues that begin to emerge from the discussion. Ask the participants to consider these issues and talk about strategies for how the issues can be handled.
7. Maintain a list of any words that some people may not know. Define the terms.
8. Ask participants to do another free write based on a particular issue of interest to them that was raised during the discussion.
9. Debrief. Ask participants how the process of this discussion was for them. What did they notice about the discussion? How do they think they can build the type of healthy communities they just discussed?

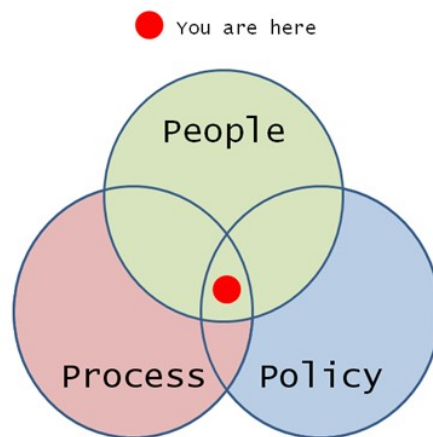


Reflective Practice and “Those People,” continued

Lenny (2006) explained that people project “fixed concepts onto others.” These projections can be either negative or positive and are often used by people to create a framework for justifying their avoidance or interaction with others. The negative projections we create about “those people” limit our interactions, but reflective practice can help us examine these projections and our process of excluding others from our community or work space.

A number of authors have explained that “reflective practice is a necessary, professional development tool” (Lenny, 2006). It is through this reflective practice that we can learn about how we may separate ourselves from others and create a social distance that prevents social cohesion and the ability to work successfully together.

Reflective practice involves: reviewing our interactions with others; reflecting on how we speak with others, including tone, volume, body language and words used; considering the amount of physical space maintained between us; examining how animated or unanimated we are when working with different people; and thinking about our use of eye contact, eye avoidance and touch. Basically, “reflective practice requires the subject to make mental and written notes of the interaction and to develop the ability to observe their selves after the event.”



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It can be too easy to assume that other people do not appreciate education or the work we do for them. It can be too easy to impose negative judgments on others to justify our excluding them or not doing our best for them. Reflective practice can help us examine our judgments and projections. It can help transform how we think and act.

The diagram above also helps to put us into an environmental context. We are often pulled in many directions by the people we serve, the policies that guide our actions, and the processes we follow. Reflective practice allows us to evaluate all of those areas in a way that ensures we do not lose sight of our common humanity.

For me, today, I make a commitment to “those people,” the throw-aways, rejects, marginalized and oppressed. Today, I see “those people” as me and when I hear someone say “those people,” I will challenge him or her. Today, I stand with “those people” and recognize my responsibility as an educator, staff person or administrator to create an institution that leads every last one of us to success. “Those people” are not a problem to be worked around. Rather, they are individuals to be included in our work. Recognizing this difference, I ask myself, “How will I use reflective practice to challenge my assumptions about ‘those people’ and to reach out and co-create an academic environment in which we can all learn and grow as people and as a community?”

Lenny, M.J. (2006). Inclusion, projections of difference and reflective practice. An interactionist perspective. Reflective Practice, 7(2), 181-192.

My Name Is Not “Those People”

By Julia K. Dinsmore

My name is not “Those People.”
I am a loving woman, a mother in pain,
Giving birth to the future, where my babies
Have the same chance to thrive as anyone.

My name is not “Inadequate.”
I did not make my husband leave us —
He chose to, and chooses not to pay child support.
Truth is though; there isn’t a job base
For all fathers to support their families.
While society turns its head, my children pay the
price.

My name is not “Problem and Case to Be Managed.”
I’m a capable human being and citizen, not just a
client.

The social service system can never replace
 The compassion and concern of loving
 grandparents, aunts,
 uncles, fathers, cousins, community —
 all the bonded people who need to be
But are not present to bring little ones forward to
their potential.

My name is not “Lazy, Dependent Welfare Mother.”
If the unwaged work of parenting,
 homemaking, and community building were
 factored
 into the gross domestic product,
My work would have untold value. And why is it
that mothers whose
Husbands support them to stay home and raise
children
Are glorified? And why don’t they get called lazy
or dependent?

My name is not “Ignorant, Dumb or Uneducated.”
I got my PhD from the university of life, school of
hard everything.
I live with an income of \$621 with \$169 in food
stamps for three kids.

Rent is \$585 ... That leaves \$36 dollars a month to
live on.

I am such a genius at surviving,
I could balance the state budget in an hour
Never mind that there’s a lack of living-wage jobs.
Never mind that it’s impossible to be the sole
emotional, social,
 spiritual, and economic support for a family.
Never mind that parents are losing their children
to gangs, drugs, stealing, prostitution, the
poverty industry,
social workers, kidnapping, the streets, the
predator.

Forget about putting more money into our schools ...
Just build more prisons!

My name is not “Lay Down and Die Quietly.”
My love is powerful, and the urge to keep my
children alive will never stop.
All children need homes and people who love them.
All children need safety
And the chance to be the people they were born to
be.

The wind will stop before I allow my sons to become
a statistic.
Before you give in to the urge to blame me,
 The blame that lets us go blind and
 unknowing
 Into isolation that disconnects
 Your humanity from mine,
Take another look. Don’t go away.
For I am not the problem, but the solution.
And ... my name is not “Those People.”

*From “My Name Is Child of God ... Not ‘Those People’:
A First-Person Look at Poverty” by Julia K. Dinsmore,
2007. Reproduced by special permission of Augsburg
Fortress Publishers. You can find the book at
www.augsburgfortress.org.*

*See a YouTube video based on this poem at
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQWbkVqZKeo.*

Diversity Calendar

January 2011

6th Three Kings Day – Hispanic. El Dia de Reyes, the day when the three wise men following the star to Bethlehem arrived bearing their treasured gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the baby Jesus.

6th Epiphany – Eastern Orthodox Christian. Commemorates the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus.

10th Seijin-no-Hi – Japan. Adults Day. Honors the coming of age of those who have turned 20 in the previous year.

14th Makar Sankranti – Hindu. Marks the start of the Pongal festival in South India.

16th Midsumma Festival – Australia. Melbourne's premier gay and lesbian arts and cultural festival.

16th World Religion Day – Ba'ha'i'. An observance that emphasizes that the goals of religion are to create unity among people, ease suffering and bring about peace.

17th Martin Luther King Jr. Day – U.S. Celebrates the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

February 2011

African American History Month

2nd Candlemas – Christian. Celebrates the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem 40 days after his birth.

2nd Imbolc – Pagan. Celebrates the middle of the season of long nights and anticipates the upcoming season of light.

3rd Setsubun – Japan. Bean-Throwing Festival. Marks the last day of winter according to the lunar calendar. Priests or celebrities at temples throw beans into the crowd, which shouts "Fortune in, demons out."

3rd Lunar New Year – International. Also known as Chinese New Year.

14th Valentine's Day – U.S. A day dedicated to romantic love.

13th-19th Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week – Christian, Jewish. Sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice to promote cooperation among Protestants, Catholics and Jews, and tolerance of all faiths.

15th Nirvana Day – Buddhist. The anniversary of Buddha's passing. Some Buddhist celebrate on Feb. 8th.

17th Lantern Festival – China. Marks the end of the Chinese New Year celebrations and the first full moon of the new year.

20th Purim – Jewish. Celebrates the rescue of ancient Persian Jews by Esther from a plot to destroy them.

20th Holi – Hindu, Sikh. Festival of Color.

21st President's Day – U.S. Celebrates the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (12th) and George Washington (22nd).

22nd Abu Simbel Festival – Egypt. The day when the light of the rising sun reaches the 180-foot deep innermost chambers of Abu Simbel, the great temple of Ramses II.

26th-March 1st Intercalary Days – Ba'ha'i'. A period of rejoicing, generosity and welcoming neighbors in preparation for the upcoming period of fasting.



Diversity Calendar



March 2011

Women's History Month

1st Independence Day – Bosnia. Bosnia and Herzegovina gained their independence during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.

7th Casimir Pulaski Day – Poland, U.S. Honors the birthday of the patriot soldier who led an unsuccessful uprising against foreign intervention.

8th International Working Women's Day – International.

Established by the International Conference of Women in Helsinki, Finland, to acknowledge contributions made by women.

9th Ash Wednesday – Christian. The first day of Lent, a 40-day period of penance and self-examination.

17th St. Patrick's Day – Ireland, U.S. Remembers the patron saint of Ireland who converted the island to Christianity in 432 C.E.

21st Shunbun-no-Hi – Japan. Celebrates the arrival of spring.

21st Benito Juarez's Birthday – Mexico. Celebrates the birth of the first Mexican president of Indian descent.

21st Race Relations Day – International. A holiday to encourage understanding among all races.

21st Naw-Ruz – Ba'ha'i'. New Year Festival.

25th Annunciation – Orthodox Christian. Remembers the visit of Archangel Gabriel to Mary of Nazareth announcing God's wish for her to become the Virgin Mother of the Messiah.

April 2011

6th National Tartan Day – Scottish American. Commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Abroath in which Scotland asserted its sovereignty over English territorial claims. The day also honors the contributions of Scottish Americans to American society.

6th Founding of the LDS Church – LDS. Celebrates the founding of the LDS Church in New York in 1830.

17th Palm Sunday – Christian. Occurs on the Sunday before Easter and signals the upcoming end of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week. Commemorates the spreading of palms and clothing in Jesus' path as he entered Jerusalem.

19th Passover – Jewish. Begins at sundown and marks the beginning of an eight-day celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. Ends on April 25th.

22nd Good Friday – Christian. Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus.

24th Easter – Christian. The most important religious feast of the Christian year, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after his death by crucifixion.

Student Achievement, Student Activities and Diversity Programs Mission

Student Achievement, Student Activities and Diversity Programs complement the educational programs offered by the Institute for Extended Learning (IEL) and provide for the holistic development of the student. The office promotes the recruitment, retention and successful completion of educational programs for all students. It fosters a climate that embraces diversity and provides co-curricular opportunities to enhance the student experience at the IEL.

The mission is accomplished through five core tasks:

1. Providing resources.
2. Providing services.
3. Sponsoring co-curricular programming.
4. Building community connections.
5. Maintaining academic partnerships.



Contact Information and Editorial Policies

Student Achievement, Student Activities and Diversity Programs at the IEL publish this newsletter for members of our school and surrounding communities. Articles are based on the best available information at the time of publication. Articles are written by James M. Mohr, unless otherwise noted.

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If you have any questions about or would like to reprint items appearing in this newsletter, contact Jim Mohr at 509-279-6081 or jmohr@iel.spokane.edu.