

# Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

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# Contents

<b>Editorial – Slowing Down .....</b>	<b>3</b>
James Freeman	
<b>A Relational Approach to Mentoring Child and Youth Care Practitioners .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Werner van der Westhuizen and Thom Garfat	
<b>The Fundamentals of Relational Practice: The Art of Relational Weaving.....</b>	<b>22</b>
John M. Digney	
<b>Remaining Relationally Grounded: The Child and Youth Care Management Ladder .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Chelan McCallion	
<b>Making the Argument for Addressing and Preventing Suicide and Suicidality Amongst Black Children, Youth and Young Adults .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Beverly-Jean Daniel	
<b>The Impact of COVID-19 on Newcomer Adolescents’ Mental Health: A Scoping Review .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Rahat Zaidi, Marigona Morina and Chantal Palmer	
<b>Exploring Attachment Styles in Various Clinical Settings and Practical Interventions to Engage Youth to Foster Healthy Relationships.....</b>	<b>84</b>
Tina Mueni, Alethia Cadore, Gary Treasure and Akomaye Undie	
<b>ADHD: Addressing Behaviors, Not Just Symptoms - A Holistic Approach to Management from Child and Youth Care Practitioners .....</b>	<b>98</b>
Taryn Herlich	
<b>Learning from Children: Experiences and Needs of Children in the Dutch Child Protection System .....</b>	<b>117</b>
Erik J. Knorth, Helen Bouma, Mónica López López and Hans Grietens	
<b>Experiences of Using WhatsApp as a Tool for International Qualitative Research: Ethics and Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>140</b>
Petra Roberts	
<b>Information .....</b>	<b>153</b>

# Slowing Down

James Freeman

**A** young boy sits with an adult nearby. You can imagine the kind of past experiences that make him skeptical to trust others. In a way it would make sense to just sit in silence. But in a chilling moment he speaks these words:

[They] went too fast. Like you say two letters and then they already asked the next question. Then you are still busy with your own answer, as you just want to tell more, so that it becomes clear, but then they already start with something else.

He had been in the child protection system and the interviewer had asked what it was like to share his story. It's painfully clear he had something to say and wanted to share it with clarity. But others in his world were moving along too fast.

I wonder who I've moved by too fast today. Being busy with my own answers. Asking the next question too soon. Starting up with something else when the moment still needed to stay open.

You'll meet this boy and others in the article by Knorth, Bouma, Lopez and Greitens in this issue of Relational Child and Youth Care. I encourage you to slow down and create a

reflective space for yourself as you read each piece in this issue. And then carry that spaciousness into your interactions. Create the pause, the expansion of time and room for us to deeply connect with and hear others. It's what you and I are here to do.

Here's what you can expect as you explore this issue ...

Werner van der Westhuizen and Thom Garfat discuss mentoring relationships and give us a model using the six elements of Garfat's philosophy of change which focuses on establishing relational safety.

Looking closely at the elements of our work in relationship with others, John Digney shares the process of finding common thinking and understanding of relational practice across the globe.

Chelan McCallion opens up and shares hopeful reflections on a career journey that reminds us all to be intentional as our roles and responsibilities change over time.

If we want to address anti-Black racism, we have to look at the troubling deaths in the lives of Black children. I'm grateful Beverly-Jean Daniel is willing to share some personal and painful experiences, encouraging us all to keep our commitment to valuing life.

There's no doubt the pandemic still has a lingering impact on the mental health of young people. One of the larger gaps in research on this is with newcomer and immigrant youth, which Rahat Zaidi, Marigona Morina, and Chantal Palmer walk us through in a rich and nuanced way that informs how we can be of help.

In a stark contrast to behavioral theories, Tina Mueni, Alethia Cadore, Gary Treasure and Akomaye Undie reach across Canada, United Kingdom, Kenya, and Nigeria to discuss attachment styles in the context of engaging healthy relationships.

Your understanding of ADHD may shift beyond medication and behavioral problems with Taryn Herlich as our guide to view the whole person behind what we see on the surface.

Looking deeper within the Dutch child protection system, Erik J. Knorth, Helen Bouma, Mónica López and Hans Grietens help us slow down and listen to the words of children describing their experiences. You'll find they also model such listening in the process of their research.

Petra Roberts picks up the topic of social media and research, which remains so relevant in our post-pandemic environment. You'll find a solid example of centering youth voices that challenges us to see how we can carry elements of physical presence into virtual spaces.

Woven throughout each article there are themes of the relational experience and of the rights of young people. In some places, clear, and others more subtle, each acknowledging the complexity of life and situations we all find ourselves in. Thanks for reading with us.

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### **James Freeman, MA, CYC-P**

lives in southern California, USA, and has worked in the Child and Youth Care field since 1995. Learn more about his work in trauma-informed leadership at [www.training-grounds.net](http://www.training-grounds.net).

# A Relational Approach to Mentoring Child and Youth Care Practitioners

Werner van der Westhuizen and Thom Garfat

*It is suggested that the discipline of mentoring originated from a character in Homer's Odyssey called Mentor. Mentor was actually the goddess Athene in disguise and her role was to accompany the young man Telemachus on a quest to find his father, Odysseus. Although Telemachus was rash and impetuous, he was also full of potential which required the proper channelling in order to manifest positive outcomes for himself and others. Mentor steers Telemachus through his journey of transformation, and he learns about the arts and crafts of enlightened rulership. At the end of the story, he is prepared and empowered to return to Ithaca to replace his father on the throne. 'Telemaque' was first published in France in 1699, and then across Europe with phenomenal success and by 1750, the name Mentor had become a label that one applied to a skilled advisor.*

## What is mentoring?

Mentoring is, first and foremost, a relationship between two people, one of them a person with desirable qualities, knowledge, experience and skills (called a mentor), and the another person who is prepared to learn from them (called a mentee).

The mentor offers support and guidance to the mentee to reach their personal and/or professional goals. They are a trusted and experienced advisor who focuses on



passing on personalised, domain-specific knowledge and competence through various relationship-focused methods. This process may involve helping to set and clarify goals and objectives and creating a space for reflective learning in which the mentee can grow and experience success. Mentors remain open to learning themselves and realise that they can also learn from the mentee during the life of this relationship.

The mentee takes responsibility for their own learning and role in the relationship by showing initiative and following through on action plans. The mentorship relationship is reciprocal and collaborative in nature. Together the mentor and mentee shape the relationship, sharing knowledge and reaching consensus about the mentee's desired learning. The learning goals are articulated early in the life of the relationship so that the process can be meaningful and address the specific learning needs of the mentee.

### **Approaches to mentoring**

Mentoring can follow a formal or informal format. Formal mentoring relationships may be found in organisations where suitable individuals are recruited as mentors as part of a company's talent management strategy and the process may therefore be more structured with clear learning outcomes. Informal mentoring, on the other hand, may develop naturally when a practitioner develops a relationship with someone, inside or outside of the same organisation, who they consider to be a role model and from whom they would like to learn. This may be a less structured form of mentoring and learning objectives may be less defined.

Mentoring models or approaches may be described based on how these relationships develop, the social situation or the structure of the mentoring process. For example, peer mentoring may involve individuals in similar positions while in supervisory mentoring, the mentor occupies a higher position in the organization than the mentee. The nature of the relationship may be more egalitarian and open, or hierarchical and structured. Mentoring is also not exclusively an individual process and may take place in a group format. Various models have been developed to structure the process of mentoring, such as the GROW model (Mind Tools, 2023) and the 5 C's Model (Keele University). The GROW

model follows the following key steps in the mentoring process from which the acronym GROW is derived:

- **G**oal
- Current **R**eality
- **O**ptions (or obstacles)
- **W**ill (or way forward).

Similarly, the 5 C's Model is structured within five key areas that provide a map for the mentoring journey, namely:

- **C**hallenges
- **C**hoices
- **C**onsequences
- **C**reative Solutions
- **C**onclusions.

While each of these descriptions or models of mentoring provide some way to structure the mentoring relationship and process, they do not adequately reflect the unique relational approach of Child and Youth Care practice and its focus on the use of daily life events. A mentoring approach and model that will be effective in guiding and supporting *child & youth care practitioner mentees would need to embrace the same philosophy and processes that are central to Relational Child & Youth Care (CYC) Practice.*

A Child & Youth Care approach to mentoring therefore applies the philosophy and principles of Relational CYC Practice in the mentorship relationship and in particular the following principles are highlighted.



- **Reflective:** The continuous process of thinking about why the practitioner does what they do, the way they do it, before, during and after their encounters with others;
- **Relational:** A focus on the mutuality of the relationship and the meaning that is co-constructed within it;
- **Intentional:** Interactions are purposeful and shaped to support developmental and growth outcomes of the individual;
- **Developmental:** Recognition of the personal and professional developmental growth stages of the individual;
- **Contextual:** The individual in constant dynamic interaction with their environment, influencing and simultaneously being influenced by all other systems;
- **Strengths-based:** An intentional focus on the potential and possibilities of the individual without ignoring the risks and vulnerabilities;
- **Collaborative:** A *doing-together* approach from a position of equality;
- **Embedded in daily life events:** The mentoring relationship does not stand outside of the day-to-day experiences of the mentor and mentee, but is embedded in these everyday life events. The mentor is a *guide-on-the-side* in the present moment, as life happens to both participants.

### **A Relational CYC Approach to Mentoring**

When the mentoring style and approach is grounded in Relational CYC Practice principles and methods, the mentoring process and methodology are not different from Relational CYC Practice. Rather, it is child and youth care practice applied to the context of practitioner support and development. In particular, the mentor applies the principles of Relational CYC Practice (Garfat et.al., 2018) and a daily life events approach and for this reason this approach is described here as Relational Child & Youth Care (CYC) Mentoring. To demonstrate how Relational CYC Mentoring is grounded in a Relational CYC approach, it is necessary to briefly describe and explore what is meant by Relational CYC Practice.



# Information

***Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*** (formerly *The Journal of Child & Youth Care*, established 1982) is committed to promoting and supporting the profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people.

This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, including personal growth and development, are essentially "relational".

Certain pieces in *RCYCP* have received peer review. However, we do not peer review all articles as we choose not to exclude those voices where peer review would be inappropriate - or on request from writers.

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**153**

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# Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

*Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* is committed to providing equitable and inclusive spaces that promote and support the global profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people, families and communities. This commitment is founded upon the belief that all human issues, are essentially “relational”.

*Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* welcomes submissions on all aspects relating to young people, families and communities. This includes material that explores the intersectionality of Child and Youth Care practice and the lived experiences of all who are engaged in Child and Youth Care practice. Considerations will also be given to interpersonal dynamics of professional practice and all submissions that assume a relational perspective. This might include topics such as cultural values, ethics, social policy, program design, supervision, education, training etc. Welcomed are also submissions that address advocacy, social justice and reconciliation practices within the diverse spaces and places of Child and Youth Care. Each issue may include refereed articles that comply with acceptable ‘academic’ standards; submissions contributed by regular and guest columnists; short pieces that describe particular relational experiences and reflections; poetry; artwork and photographs.

Material should be submitted by email to [rcycp@press.cyc-net.org](mailto:rcycp@press.cyc-net.org) in standard word processing format (eg. .doc, .rtf). Formal articles should not exceed 6000 words in length (excluding references). Referencing should conform to either APA or Harvard format. Author-date citations should be used within the text and a double-spaced reference section should accompany each article. In all submissions, authorship details including an abstract of no more than 150 words should be included, as well as a short list of keywords at the beginning of the article, a headshot photo and a short author bio of about 100 words to publish with your article. Importantly, authors should also indicate whether a peer review is required (in addition to the standard editorial review).

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