

Counseling For Working Class: Weaving Authentic Practice

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I Working-Class Self: Making Rope

My father could make rope. A few years ago, I was visiting back home and my dad was telling stories. He was in the middle of one about his nephew Jim, some of the shenanigans they got into as boys, and he happened to mention that they were out at the barn, making rope. “It was raining,” he said, “we had nothing else to do, so we were making rope.” And he went on with his story.

Making rope, I thought. Did he say that they were *making rope*? I mean, rope was such a basic thing. So essential. Ubiquitous. They did farm work, bush work, yard work. Rope must have been really important back then. They needed it for everything. And he’s saying, they could make their own.

I waited till the end of his story, of course. Then I asked him, Dad? Did you say you were *making rope*? How could you make rope? I don’t know how to make rope.

He said “Of course we could make rope. Why would we pay 3 cents for 50 feet of rope in town when we could make our own. Any ninny knows how to make rope, he said, you make it from straw. Surely, with all your education, you must know that!”

I said, No dad. I don’t know that. They don’t actually teach how to make rope at university. I don’t think anybody knows that anymore—how to make rope from straw.

And by the way, Dad, I said with a smirk, I don’t think anybody knows anymore how to weave straw into gold either. That got a chuckle.

But that’s what my dad said. Imagine! They could make their own rope. I should have got him to show me how at the time, but I didn’t. He died a few months later. I’d

give a lot today to go back to that moment and get my dad to show me how to make rope from straw.

I often describe myself as “working-class” but in truth I come from “south of there.” We were poor. My parents both came from large, poor families and neither one ever went beyond grade six. My dad drank all his life. But he worked and kept a roof over our heads. My mother was a born-again Christian who lived for her God and her children. My mother fed us and kept us safe. All that I have achieved—is on my mother.

We lived in the country and my people knew and loved the land. They were hunters and trappers, and everybody had a big garden. In that day, people really lived in community in the country. Our neighbor-lady had a well, she had water, which meant that we had water too, though we had no well.

Where I come from, neighbors were like family. They shared the good, and they shared the bad. Community people were self-sufficient though. If we couldn’t grow it or kill it, we could build it. Did I mention, my dad could make rope? I come from the people who invented the idea “getter done.”

The down side of living poor in the country was that everybody knew who was in your family. They knew about some of your cousins being Native and others being “mulatto” as they said. They knew about your dad going to jail and your mother bowing her head and saying grace right out loud in a restaurant. They knew, and wouldn’t hesitate to say, that today you were wearing their sister’s hand-me-down plaid skirt.

But the up side of living poor in the country was that I got the same education as everyone else. With limited resources and a small population, it is harder for systems to

sort people by their background. There was only one school and all the kids went there. So my sister and I got the same high quality education as the fair-haired children of town councilors and business owners and doctors. There was no “special” school with an occupational focus. No group assignment for “buckling down” as opposed to “blooming.”

But then I had to leave home and go away to university. It was there that I first started thinking overtly about social class and how it influences people, and therefore how to work with it. And recognizing class bias. By the time I was taking my Master of Education degree in Counseling, I was really working that perspective. My Masters thesis used a working-class and feminist perspective to explore the life stories of women who had been adolescent mothers.

I did all that so that I could help my people. My mother used to tell the story about how, in my teens when she asked why I wanted to study psychology, I answered that I wanted to understand my father. I did, and I wanted to understand everybody. I wanted to understand why people were the way they were, and why they did what they did. So that I could help them. I wanted to help my family, my neighbors and my community, and people everywhere who were like them. Like us.

I came into this field thinking I’ll just learn from those university people, but I’m not going to be like them. I’ll still be me, still really understand my people, but then I’ll have the education and the expertise to help them.

But learning takes humility, openness to going beyond what you already know. And so you have to balance opening yourself to new ideas and interpretation, with

holding onto that vast and beautiful territory of knowledge about your own people. And that can be quite a trick.

It can put you in peril for the Devil's bargain. The Devil's bargain is a situation in which, with the best of intentions, you make a deal. You make a bargain where you just have to give up one little thing, one ethical consideration. But you see, the cards are stacked, you've signed in blood, and you're really bartering away your soul. Usually, you wind up even losing the one cherished thing you made the deal to save.

For working-class and poverty-class taking on professions, it is no easy task to get what we need from a system of knowledge that excludes us. Often, one that is designed to control, judge and disempower us. And sometimes, we find ourselves in the throes of the Devil's bargain. Because in learning all the valuable and helpful things we need in order to do our job, we have given up too much of ourselves. We can't even help the very people we did all this for. We've learned ourselves right out of understanding them, and we don't know how to talk to them anymore.

So I have been trying to avoid making the Devil's bargain. I have been working as a school counselor for fifteen years. Working with trying to understand how social class comes out in people's lives, their problems, their strengths. So I can help them. And I think I'm sort of getting the hang of it.

God knows the days sure have come when I could use some rope, though. You know, something strong and flexible, something practical with which to hoist or connect without fraying. I had no one to help me; my people were far away. So I just started weaving the lowly straw of my poverty-class self. To be a counselor in an authentic way and help the ones I came here for.

II The Devil's Bargain versus Authentic Poverty-class Counselor

Now let's talk a little about counseling theories. My counseling training was in basic person-centered, humanistic counseling. I have found that the basics of humanistic counseling have served me and my clients well. In fact, I have found this orientation indispensable when working with poverty-class people.

Way back in the 50's and 60's, Carl Rogers, the father of humanistic therapy, said that effective therapy was characterized really, not by techniques, but by attitudes (Thorne, 1992). And not by the attitudes of the client, but those of the therapist. The therapist had to have these three core attitudes; congruence, empathy, and respect/prizing.

Having congruence meant that you were authentic. Genuine. You were your true self and responded to the client with sincerity. Empathy meant that you had to really understand where the person was coming from, really "get" their subjective reality. How they saw themselves and the world. The counselor had to be both willing and able to enter the private perceptual world of the client. And then be able to respond to it; show the client that you got it. You knew them.

The third attitude, a deep respect for the client, was also referred to as prizing, acceptance, or unconditional positive regard (UPR). Truly and unconditionally valuing the person. Rogers was working at a time when esteem for another was usually conditional. They had to deserve your respect. Person-centered counseling, however, meant not just accepting clients for something they did or didn't do, for their accomplishments. Barb Jensen (n.d.) differentiates between the middle class pursuit of "becoming" versus the working-class emphasis on "being." Well, Rogers identified the

former as an over-riding condition with which his clients struggled. He said that instead clients should be accepted just for being. Just for being themselves, without condition.

Now, Carl Rogers himself apparently said some disparaging things about low-class people and how his ideas really apply more to the insightful progressive folks of other classes (Jensen, n.d.). Not to excuse classist thinking, but our people can benefit mightily from these ideas anyway. Theories based in humanity and truth and steeped in wisdom, while they may not have been made FOR us, can be helpful TO us. Frank ‘n Furter told Janet in the Rocky Horror Picture Show, “I didn’t make him FOR YOU!” These ideas may not have been made with us in mind, theorists may not have considered us capable of using them. But we can still use and benefit from these ideas—hand-me-down plaid and all.

In person-centered counseling, we have the concept of “self as instrument” (Thorne, 1992), which is very compatible with counseling for class. The person the counselor is, our personality, history, personal style and so on, are the tools that build and fix and repair. I’ve been getting better at truly being who I am as I sit with kids or talk with their parents. Who I am; a poverty class mixed-blood woman from the country.

And they don’t have to be the same as me; I have worked effectively with people of many different backgrounds. But this is who I am. And it’s amazing how much better I can hear when I’m sitting solidly in who I am.

I talk about working-class counseling and counseling for working-class, but specifically, my strength is in working within the sub-group of poverty-class, both because that’s my background and because most of my experience has been with poverty-class kids. I worked in a Northern school division for years, in which 98% of

students were Aboriginal. Canadian-Indian. The poverty in North American Aboriginal communities is infamous. In my experience, the psychological worlds of poverty-class people can differ greatly from those of the working-class.

III “Giving them the language” versus Authentic Counselor, Listening and Speaking

I want to talk now about counselors listening and speaking authentically. How and what we communicate is so important to building a quality counseling relationship. That is why it is so problematic when counselors lack class awareness or when unquestioned classism comes into play.

The power of relationship-building with kids is increasingly well understood (See for instance Neufeld & Mate, 2005; Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 1999/2002; Brendtro & Larson, 2006). And when we are building relationships, words are our raw materials. Our straw. And how can counselors weave relationships of consequence with clients if we aren't speaking the same language? Worse still, what if we think we are, but we aren't?

A few years ago, I met Kelly, a grade nine girl from a poor background who had moved to town and was trying to make friends. She was being excluded by a group of popular girls, who often made derogatory comments about her clothes, her hair and her mom's car. I was working at forming a relationship with Kelly, coming to understand some of the things her and mom were dealing with in their lives. I had told the story about me, in somebody's sister's hand-me-down plaid—being smarter than them! We were starting a dialogue about what friendship means and what harassment is; and sharing some of our values, such as the importance of people over possessions.

One day, Mrs. Mithe, another counselor, informed me that she had done some “problem solving” with Kelly. Mrs. Mithe had told me previously that, having worked for years with welfare people, she knew that the problem was a deficit of skills. Social class was really irrelevant to counseling.

Mrs. Mithe said she had told Kelly that we can influence people’s perceptions of us by how we present ourselves. She had advised Kelly about “the better stores” for shopping, and “the better shops” for hair. “It’s all about making the right choices, being assertive, not taking a victim stance,” Mrs. Mithe informed me. “I gave her the language,” she said, “and the rest is up to her.”

This story illustrates how what passes for counseling insight can sometimes be no more than middle-class ethnocentric materialism. I think that when we counsel for class we have to be aware of who is “giving us the language” in a larger sense. We have to strive to connect our counseling with our true values and beliefs, our authentic real self.

The next time I saw Kelly, she asked, Ms. Lavell, do I have to go back to Mrs. Mithe? I mean, she seems very nice and everything. But she talked so much, I got a headache.”

“What did she say?” I asked.

“I actually don’t know,” Kelly responded. “But she seemed so happy that I didn’t want to hurt her feelings, so I just sat there nodding and agreed with everything she said.”

After all these years of working with and observing middle-class professionals, I notice the way their version of counseling mirrors what I consider the invasive parent-child interaction style so predominant in middle-class families. It reminds me of the

rationalistic talking, led by and focused on the parents' agenda, identified by Annette Lareau (2003) as part of "concerted cultivation" parenting.

Mrs. Mithe read Kelly's response as rapport-development and agreement, whereas Kelly herself, though overwhelmed with a form of communication she did not relate to, was simply trying to cooperate and "be nice."

But what are poverty- and working-class values and how do they differ from others? We know that, like other working-class people, those from poverty have their own cultures, which are different from and misunderstood by dominant cultures. These cultures include unique values, styles of interaction and communication (Jensen, unpublished; Smith, n.d.; Lubrano, 2004; Sears, n.d.).

Low income people often have history with systems designed to surveil and control them, so they have developed ways of dealing with system professionals. Ways which were/ are functional but which are counter-productive to actually being helped. They may be suspicious of people in authority. But they resist us professional types indirectly through passivity and avoidance, rather than directly with rational argument.

Generally, I find that poverty-class people live in the here-and-now. They often travel from one crisis to the next; always in survival mode and rarely getting beyond it. Learned helplessness may outweigh any motivation when people come from multiple generations of poverty.

Trauma is common among poverty-class people; it is less denied and often expected. People go to jail, people get abused, people die by violence or accident or suicide. Children are lost to the child welfare system or the streets.

Poverty-class people more often have unconventional family arrangements. Diversity is more in evidence, there is more intermarriage. And like myself, many of my clients have mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Poverty-class people tend to relate to others in a spontaneous, open, friendly way. They feel like doing something and they do it. They just show up, and say, “Hey, I came to see you.” So, they will miss appointments, either because of absence or because they forgot. Or just because it turned out they didn’t need to talk right now. But they will want to talk another time. They value being easygoing and non-judgmental. Lateness is not a big deal. They like to joke and tease people. When there isn’t a crisis, they are content in the moment. They laugh big.

I sometimes describe my class origins as the Addictions or Alcohol class. Poverty-class people tend toward negative addictions such as alcohol and drugs, crime and infidelity. Not uniquely so. But certainly we are the ones who carry the stereotypes for these addictions.

Middle-class people, on the other hand, gravitate to the so-called “positive addictions.” Not-really-that-bad-addictions like the out-of-control pursuit of, and focus on, possessions; a compulsive quest for “success;” an unmanageable sense of superiority to others and competitiveness to a fault. And then there are drugs. Are mood-altering drugs still drugs if prescribed by a doctor?

Which addictions people have and societal attitudes about them can be a major marker of social class.

Poverty-class people, however, tend not to be joiners. While the kids I work with want to understand their lives and express their inner worlds, they avoid structured,

organized counseling settings. They are sensitive to being labeled. And as illustrated above, they are often confused and/or bored with the formalized, indirect and overly-polite talk of middle-class professionals.

Poverty-class people often talk differently. Poverty-class kids do get overwhelmed at times with “too many words.” They often appreciate longer wait times, time to process what is being said. And as mentioned in Kelly’s story earlier, they can find middle-class forms of expression and expectations for conversation bewildering.

They speak directly and honestly, and try to say what they mean. They don’t have that built-in censor; making them couch their words and even their thoughts in some syrupy, hesitant mindset. They just spit it out.

In my experience, poverty-class people don’t tend to use the typical format of Person A: 2 sentences, then Person B: 2 sentences, and so on. We are often storytellers. We take longer turns. In a typical conversation, I may sit and listen to a kid for five minutes. Then, she and I will sit in silence for awhile and mull things over. I may respond with some clarifying comment or lead the discussion toward some insight, but I am just as likely to launch into some ten-minute story from my childhood, or from my life as a mother, that relates to the kid’s story. Again, more silence. Then the kid might nod and say, “Yeah. So there ya have it,” and tell some more.

We hear so much today about poverty-class people’s limited vocabulary, their problems with expressive speech and so on. And no doubt these things are true for some. But I also think that part of the negative perception of poverty-class talk is that its many strengths—the use of story, for instance—elude the evaluating professionals.

IV Some Things I Do, Therefore, in Counseling for Class

When I first started counseling, I found that referrals from administrators and teachers often fell into these categories: middle class kids who were “having a hard time” and needed support; working-class kids who had academic problems and needed guidance; and poverty-class kids who needed anger management—had to learn self-control and make better decisions. In other words, middle class kids who needed support to “bloom” versus working-class kids who needed guidance to “buckle down.”

So I now consciously pursue connection with non-middle-class kids in ways not focused on pathology. I lead a writing group, I do a lunch time friendship group where we play cards and board games and sing Karaoke. I run a group for Indigenous kids exploring identity and culture.

I don't preschedule meetings unless necessary or requested. I try to keep things open for when a kid decides to come in.

When I sit with kids, I often de-center and un-focus the talk with activities. We sit at my round wooden table. Sometimes we color or lay out cards. Sometimes we walk outdoors. I provide informal welcoming quiet and space for spontaneous student talk. Just being together. I don't really take charge and lead the visit. I let the kid's topic emerge.

At the beginning of the counseling, I often take the burden of talk. I tell them about myself—any stories that seem right—in order to make them comfortable. I share from the heart about myself and what I believe, develop trust by being trustworthy, and work the relationship. I use my (poverty-class) “self as instrument.”

Whether or not I ever mention social class, I always show through my stories and references the ways that “I am like them.” And I give the message that I like/accept their

family. Generally speaking, I take every opportunity to get to know the mom/guardian and develop a relationship. I try to act like a neighbor-lady.

I downplay behavior-management and focus on developing trusting relationships. When I must address behavior, I think about the goals of behavior; power, acceptance, mastery, independence (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002). I focus on helping kids find positive ways to meet their goals.

I do not jump to problem solving or advising. Being listened to is powerful, is good for the relationship and can be healing of itself.

While avoiding giving too much advice, I do tell stories. And my stories are often instructive. The interesting thing is that poverty- and working-class kids of any age almost always “get” my stories. They know the point of my story, how my story connects to their story, and why I told it when I did. (This is actually quite sophisticated thinking.)

They often respond at the end by contrasting their situation to the one in the story. But they will then reference my stories in further conversations. “Ms. Lavell,” they may begin a conversation, “remember when your neighbors ran over your dog that time, and nobody even told you?” And that will be their jumping-off point for a story about an adult in their life who doesn’t take their feelings into account.

V Stories: Working-class counselor, authentic self

Jacob story: Authentic counseling and the problem of accurate empathy

I want to illustrate these ideas now with some stories about kids I have worked with. Certainly, trying to counsel poverty-class people without a class analysis can be ineffective at best. Consider the problem of accurate empathy.

Awhile back, I heard from colleagues about a grade ten boy named Jacob. Jacob had got into a fight while leaving Assembly in the morning; some other high school boys had shoved Jacob's sister (in grade seven), and she had fallen down. Jacob took matters into his own hands and fought the boy who shoved his sister.

At the staff meeting where this came up, there was a lot of merriment over how many different fathers Jacob's seven siblings had. Jacob's marks and attendance were reasonable, however, and it was decided that Jacob "wasn't as bad as most of those kids." I said that I would be glad to speak with Jacob but one of the teachers said that Jacob should instead see Mr. Biggs, the middle-class male counselor. "What he needs is some good male role modeling," the teacher asserted.

Interestingly, Jacob himself came to see me a few weeks later. He said his sister had recommended me as someone who "actually likes us." I asked how things were going in his talks with Mr. Biggs.

"Mr. Biggs?" he looked at me blankly. "Oh! The career guy." He said he never really talked to Mr. Biggs. "He just said that I should have let the supervisors deal with it," Jacob told me. "He said I had to learn to act responsibly, not sabotage my career goals over such a minor thing."

Jacob paused. "A minor thing?" he said, and his voice broke. This normally calm, even-tempered young man became overwhelmed and teary again as he described seeing a 200-pound boy shove his little sister hard, her sprawling on the gym floor, the group of boys laughing and pointing. "My little sister. On her ass in front of half the school! That's no minor thing."

Jacob was relieved when I responded by telling a story from my own grade seven year, in which my tough-girl best friend beat up a boy who was bullying me. He laughed like crazy at the part where this ugly little girl from our end of town threw that big son of a business man right over the caragana bushes.

I told Jacob that, although I didn't want to see him get in trouble or have problems with his education, I was proud of him. Where I come from, I told him, it is right for a man to stand up for his sister.

"I know, eh?" he agreed. He said that his sisters were kind of a pain in the ass. But what kind of man would do nothing in that situation? Jacob and I went on to have many conversations about the complexities of becoming a man today, about his desire to be the first of his mom's kids to graduate from high school, and about the challenges of trying to help out and care for his family while also finding his own path in life.

The middle-class counselor's worldview informed by individualism and the prioritizing of a success motivation over loyalty to family interfered with accurately understanding how Jacob felt. I was able to connect with him because, when it comes to empathy, social class often trumps gender.

To me, this story illustrates the value of speaking sincerely from the poverty-class self. Instead of responding as some supposed homogeneous, sanitized, cultureless, non-classed person, I bring in my whole self. This allows the kid to bring in his whole self too, uncensored for the professional ear.

Dee story: Authentic counselor conveying prizing

One of the many valuable things I learned at university years ago is that there is a difference between you as a counselor prizing/ respecting/ unconditionally caring for a

person, and that person feeling prized. Feeling cared for, cherished, absolutely unconditionally accepted.

Dee was a “bad kid,” a hell-on-wheels teenager in her Aboriginal community. She was tough, un-cowed by teachers or principals, and had no future plans but the next week-end party. She was sent to me early on in my first year as a counselor. A tall muscular girl, she had a reputation as a bully. When confronted about her treatment of others, she sulked, lied and made excuses. “You white people are all racist,” she glared at me on that first day. “You don’t understand us and you never will.”

I think I have a true talent for “bad kids;” not least because most of my childhood friends and cousins carried that label. I liked Dee. But how to show that? How to show Dee that I liked her and accepted her, but at the same time to honestly convey that what she did to people was not right?

I went with the basics; have empathy, show unconditional acceptance, use my authentic real self. I listened a lot. I joked and told stories. I showed that I wasn’t shocked by her words or her lifestyle. I gave no advice. I never said, “That’s inappropriate.”

I reflected Dee’s feelings, and then, very tentatively, I shared my own understanding of the needs that motivated her. The need for power; not to feel helpless and vulnerable. To feel big. Her need for mastery; to feel that she was smart and capable and good at things. (She was really good at intimidating and controlling people, for instance! And she was excellent at “shocking the white people.”)

But part of being authentic with poverty-class kids includes a thing I refer to as “calling the bullshit.” Poverty-class people are used to “pulling the wool over the eyes” of all those well-meaning nosy professionals. But doing this in counseling sabotages their

chances of really being helped. So to be effective working that, the counselor has to have a finely-tuned and well-maintained Bullshit Detector.

I never put Dee in a position to have to defend her behavior toward other students, but of course she brought it up herself. I sat there with my arms crossed and waited. Then I said, “Dee, let me ask you a question, a really important question. Do you feel that I like you?”

She said, “Ms. Lavell, sometimes I think you’re the only person that likes me. Actually, Ms. Lavell, she said, You’re the only person who ever really listened to me. You really know what I’m saying. You don’t try to shut me up, or put words in my mouth. You really listen.”

“Oh good,” I said. “Cuz that’s true. I do really like you and care about you, Dee, no matter what. Yur my girl.” I always reminded her that what we shared together was confidential (within reasonable limits of course), and I wasn’t going to snitch on her.

But when she’d tell me that some little blond chickadee was “giving her looks” and “trying to be all that” and she was “gonna take that bitch down!” I’d leave a space, bring in my best catty-girl purring voice, and say “Oh dear, poor little Dee. Threatened by a hundred pound blondee!”

She’d laugh in spite of herself. I’d bring up stories about my tough-girl cousins who always beat up the little pretty girls. Then I’d say, “Remember what I told you about jealousy? It’s called the green-eyed monster.” She’d smirk, nodding. And admit that she did feel jealous. And hurt. Just looking at those girls reminded her that, no matter what she did, the world would always judge them pretty. And Dee, not.

Whatever difficult situations Dee got into, I was the person who could listen while she told the truth. I think of the scene in *A Few Good Men*, where the army lawyer declares, “I just want the truth!” And Jack Nicholson’s character retorts, “You can’t HANDLE the truth!” Well I could handle Dee’s truth, both about the things that had been done to her as a little girl, and about the things she was now doing to others.

I was the person who could sit while she admitted to disappointment in her own actions. Discouragement with school or any imaginable future in which she would be neither a doormat nor a bully. I was the one who suggested to her, tentatively, that this was possible. That she had grown in strength and understanding in the brief years I had known her. That we could plant a seed, and in time, it would grow.

I resisted the easy path of encouraging Dee to distance from her troubled extended family and community. And when Dee got pregnant, planning to drop out of school and keep the baby, I was the one who believed that she could be a good mother. That she could honor the good in her own mother, but without reproducing the negatives. I encouraged her to return to school when her child was older.

Dee graduated a few years later with a GED. And not too long after that, when her own little girl Deidre was having issues at school but refusing to talk to me, (“You white people are always against us!”) Dee came over from her job as receptionist at the local government office, which is a pretty darn good job in that community.

When Dee arrived at my office that day, she gave me a big hug. Then she sat down next to me and drew little Deidre onto her lap. With one arm around me, she squeezed Deidre. “My girl,” she said. “This is Ms. Lavell. She was my counselor when I

went to school. She helped me and she can help you. It's okay to tell her anything. Because she likes us and she's on our side.”

VI Effective Working-Class Counselor, Weaving

Well that's it for my stories. I have been trying to convey a little about how to work in real and effective ways in counseling for class. I myself have been learning how to weave that rope from my unique straw. Nobody knows how to do this for us, so we just have to do it ourselves.

We have to be ever mindful of who is “giving us the language,” though. Like in the story of Rumpelstiltskin, we have to watch out for that greedy king pressing us to weave our straw into gold—for his benefit. We have to watch out for that mean little man too, who says he will help us. But his price is inhuman steep; he wants to take our baby. Steal away our precious children. Everything we have done all this for. We have to be careful not to make that Devil's bargain.

But some days, a kid comes into my office, hurt and discouraged, and a little while later, walks out hopeful, not feeling so alone. And then I look around my office, at the wooden table with the playing cards and books and coloring things. At my bookshelves, their top ledges busy with miniatures of eagles and angels and children. And I realize that, in my own way today and for purposes true, I have indeed woven that straw into gold.

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BRIEF ANNOTATED READING LIST
On Works that Support the Importance of Relationship-building

Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern (1990/2002), *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Combines American Indian medicine wheel teachings with psychological understanding of the goals of behavior. The authors suggest that children who are often referred to as "alienated", "troubled" or "difficult" are at risk because they live in an environment that is hazardous - one that breeds discouragement. By contrast, an environment that promotes courage is one that fosters changes to meet the needs of the young person and society and subsequently reclaims youth at risk. Champions the concept of resilience and the importance of the shared values of belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery.

Gordon Neufeld, Gabor Maté. (2005), *Hold Onto Your Kids*. New York: Ballantine.

Champions relationships and connections over behavioral goals with children and youth. Theory shows that children are by nature neither emotionally nor mentally mature enough to be the main influences in each other's lives. Yet children today are often lost to the peer culture. The authors show how we are losing contact with our children and how this loss undermines their development. Argues for parent-child attachment and support of adult authority.

Alfie Kohn. (1993/1999), *Punished by Rewards; The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Against behaviorism. Research and logic-based, Kohn strongly argues that if punishment is anything that reduces the frequency of a response, then token economies, grades and other rewards should be seen as punishment. "Drawing from hundreds of studies, Kohn demonstrates that people actually do inferior work when they are enticed with money, grades, or other incentives. Programs that use rewards to change people's behavior are similarly ineffective over the long run. Promising goodies to children for good behavior can never produce anything more than temporary obedience. In fact, the more we use artificial inducements to motivate people, the more they lose interest in what we're bribing them to do. Rewards turn play into work, and work into drudgery."
(www.alfiekohn.org)