

18th September 2014

Yesterday I went to talk to a local Wymondham charity, Star Throwers, 'Caring for those affected by Cancer', to discuss becoming a volunteer with them and setting up a small therapeutic writing group for patients and their carers affected by cancer. www.starthrowers.org.uk

It was a very good meeting and we all felt enthusiastic about this additional service for the patients who come for support.

Of course, this takes time to set up and run as all the usual checks have to be undertaken like DBS, membership of professional bodies and insurance but I would hope that, by the end of October, to have settled on a firm morning time and have agreed wording for their flyers and posters. I am excited about returning to working with patients affected by cancer.

18th October 2014

I have been working on some information for a network that other counsellors and complementary therapists are excited about setting up in the area. It is a new idea for Norfolk and will involve offering our therapies to those that are in the terminal stages of their illnesses in their own homes so they can have a peaceful, serene and dignified death with their friends and families around them. It links in to my previous nursing career in cancer nursing and end of life care as well as my interest in all aspects of loss and bereavement counselling. I think it may also link in with my reading of poetry earlier in my life. Death is often a topic of poetry and I became familiar with most of its aspects long before I became a nurse and faced it for real.

I know there will be a lot of questions about what we would aim to achieve with this network but I found a quote by Rabindranath Tagore from *Stray Birds* that really resonates with me and sums up why I am excited about this.

"The world rushes over the strings of the lingering heart making the music of sadness"

As a society we do not admit many thoughts of death into our lives, nor do we talk about it, so it comes as a huge shock when that time is announced and arrives. We feel as if we have wasted our lives and we often die alone and afraid. If we thought and talked more about it, it would begin to become less surprising and we would be able to plan and share our remaining time more fully. We would be able to make our lives more fulfilling much earlier.

9th November 2014

I saw a film yesterday that I had not planned to go to the cinema to see but I am very glad that I did. I watched Christopher Nolan's science fiction epic '*Interstellar*'. You may be wondering why I am writing about a film in my blog on my counselling website? I am a life-long science fiction buff and have often found that this genre can say things that other films could not manage. These films can be subversive, thought-provoking, mind-boggling or moving. '*Interstellar*' was all of this and more. Yes, it has amazing special effects but, for me, this was not what this film was about. They just seemed to be part of the film and didn't detract from the central core of the story as some films SFX can do. Perhaps it is just my experience with SF!

For me, the real heart of the film was about love, hope and about loss. If you wanted to you could find and explore spirituality in the film as well. In my work and way of being the more of myself I can have in my awareness the more effective counsellor I will be and the more my life will grow. Everything in our lives can be 'grist to the mill' and I take every opportunity to look more deeply into all of us and the world around us.

The basic premise is that the Earth is running out of food, space exploration is just a memory and it is heading to the point where the last crops will succumb to disease and humanity will die. The protagonist, a man named Cooper, pilots a space mission to find a suitable planet for humanity to move to. He leaves behind his father and two children. The meaning and concept of Time is somewhat pulled apart with some jargon but the idea of the passing of time being different for the characters in space and on Earth is incredibly powerful, almost overwhelming at times. There is much 'science' and 'fiction' in the film but I have rarely been so moved in this type of film. The theme, to me at least, is about all the losses we experience in life, how love can give both hope and hopelessness and that time is a relative concept that passes differently for different people.

The film soundtrack was by Hans Zimmer and fitted perfectly, aiding and abetting the emotional kick the film delivered. There was even some poetry from Dylan Thomas to add to the mix.

We all suffer loss in our lives, often brushing them aside in our busy lives. It is not just the death of loved ones but all the stages in our lives. One example being leaving childhood behind as we step into adolescence - the loss of innocence and dreams. Relationships change and shift with time and loss is involved there. Moving house, changing job, being made redundant, putting a beloved pet to sleep, these are all losses but not ones many people in this fast paced world of today can take time to acknowledge. The loss of a loved one can trigger all these previous losses so the feelings can be overwhelming leaving people confused about the power of their thoughts and feelings. Awareness and acknowledgement of life's losses can help this.

This is what this film is about for me: recognising all the losses but admitting the love there and holding out your hand to hope that is there with a sense of connectedness with the spiritual.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=llq4chTn6Z4

19th December 2014

We are rapidly approaching Christmas and the New Year and this time of year can be difficult for many people. Particularly those who are alone, distant from family or do not have any family any longer, those estranged from family or friends, those who are working away from home during the Christmas period, those who have been bereaved having lost close loved ones, those who find the consumer-led festivities take them away from a more spiritual time and end up in a crisis of despair, those who suffer from mental illness and those who are homeless. I know I sometimes feel there are more people at this time of year who need help than at other times.

To help me deal with all that happens this time of year I have used therapeutic writing to get in touch with what I have been feeling. I would like to share the poetry with you here. I have written some Haiku that seem to have a both a joyful and melancholy feel to them, which seems to encapsulate how I feel at this point in the year. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry, just 17 syllables long over 3 lines. Line 1 is 5 syllables, line 2 is 7 syllables and line 3 is 5 syllables. It is a very concise form of poetry.

Port dark Christmas time
Pools of light warmly entice
Like goblets of mulled wine.

Fading Christmas carols
Race past on the wind's breath.
Gone in a moment.

Holly and ivy wreaths rest,
Snowbound against front doors.
Woven memories.

Laughter and snowmen
Dull the burning pain of warming hands
Before a family fire.

Let children run, play.
They will soon forget this time,
As age adds heavier years.

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