

up front

This is the first *The Independent Practitioner* for 2008. Another start, another year... I often find myself wondering about where time goes and what I've done with it.

Work takes up a large portion of my time. Work with clients, work for the division, work for home, work for my marriage... so that by the third day into January, it felt strange to STILL be wishing people Happy New Year. Nevertheless, it seemed to me to be an important part of this thing called relationship. So Happy New Year to you all, no matter how long you've been with us.

Resolutions. Things we resolve to do and then join in the clamour about breaking those same resolutions. It's like giving ourselves permission to fail, to think it's okay to fail, and to share our failures with a whole bunch of like-minded people.

Clients don't just do that at New Year, they do it in different ways, all year round... and then bring the failures to us, in order to try and get some reality back into their understandings of their lives and how they want them to be.

It's our job as practitioners to listen to where the breaks have happened in our clients' lives, and to help them to understand and see where or how they can take action to make a difference that they see as positive. When I was training to become a counsellor, I remember my lecturer telling us that he was aware of 416 different modalities of counselling/psychotherapy and thinking that I would never manage to learn them all, so would I be a competent counsellor. I expect there are at least as many again by now.

I wanted to be a competent counsellor, not a brilliant one, just someone who could maintain a framework within which my clients could come and work and I could be there with them. In the ensuing discussion, which went on around me but without me, I was still thinking about why there are quite so many ways of helping people through talking therapy. Was it that there were so many different types of life failure that we had to have a new modality to meet a specific need, or was it because we like to conform, as individuals, to what we believe we can agree on, but that we really only get involved in modalities for which there is training near where we live?

I also remember being told to be aware that once qualified, we were not to read learned journals and textbooks and get excited by some part of a new therapy being discussed and then apply it to our clients on the 'that bit would be wonderful if applied to client 37' as if it were a soothing balm. My resolution that year was to read and to wonder and to talk about the things I learned, to see how they might fit into what I already did, to help clients. Hmm!

Thus, my relationship with my work is always being changed, mostly in a positive way, and I do get the satisfaction of seeing clients taking up their own power again and getting that part of their lives back on track.

As with relationships and the need to review and ask the awkward questions that can take me further on my own journey as well as helping my clients to move on, so within AIP there is an executive team of whom I am immensely proud, for the way they have responded to the challenge of providing some of what BACP would call an 'agenda for change', who also need to review and ask awkward questions of themselves for AIP. This is our strategic goal for 2008, with professionalism as the change point.

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The deadline for inclusion in the next issue is 5 April 2008.