

Regional Emergency



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

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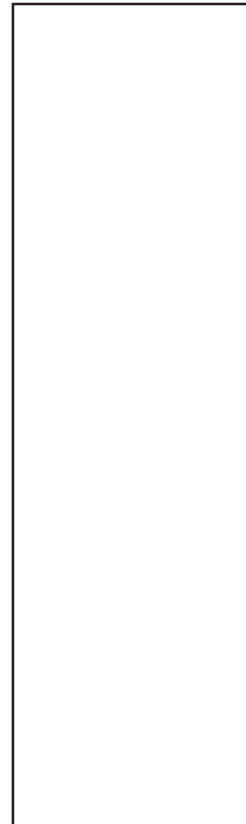
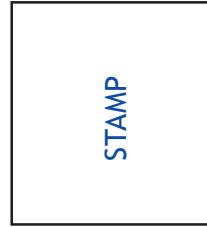
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REGIONAL EMERGENCY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Regional Psychosocial Network Consultation and Pre-Test Workshops Slated for 2004

A Major Step Towards the Formation of Regional Emergency Psychosocial Response Team

www.psychosocialnetwork.org

In 2004, the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network plans to conduct two consultation workshops as part of the development of the capability of the East Asia and Pacific Region to provide rapid response in emergency cases. While details on their venue, actual date, and list of participants have not yet been finalized, the workshops shall be launched to consult stakeholders to finalize the Regional Psychosocial Response in Emergencies Course Modules. Representatives from eleven countries from the East Asia and Pacific region are expected to participate in the July 2004 consultation workshop, a pre-test of the course modules. Meanwhile, more than 15 people coming from the NGO community in the southern Philippines are expected to participate in the October 2004 workshop. The second workshop is envisioned to be a simulation of an actual training done in the field during an emergency situation. The two workshops are being supported by United Nations Children's Fund – East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF-EAPRO).

The finalization of this tool during the planned consultation workshop is a major step towards the formation of the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Response Team (REPRT), which shall be using the modules. Conceptualized and developed last year, the modules contain important training materials, guidelines, methodologies and approaches to be used as

reference by people and organizations involved in psychosocial care in emergencies. The modules and the planned workshops are the most recent achievements since the August 2002 meeting in Bangkok that resulted in the establishment of the Regional Emergency Psychosocial Support Network. During that meeting, the University of the Philippines' Program on Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program of the Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS PST) was designated as the network's secretariat.

Dr. Elizabeth Protacio de Castro, Associate Professor and Convenor of the UP-CIDS PST expressed great optimism in 2004 for the regional network, which has been generously supported by UNICEF-EAPRO. "We are expecting that the response team would become operational by next year," she said. "The underlying assumption behind the emphasis for the modules and creation of

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Communities and Culture **Towards Change:** Psychosocial Work in East Asia and the Pacific Region

The special issue features articles on the pivotal role of communities and culture in doing psychosocial support, focusing in the East Asia and Pacific Region. Mainly based from the field reports and observations by Regional Network Consultant Dr. Les Spence, the articles feature psychosocial support cases, one each from the countries of Australia, Cambodia, East Timor, and the Philippines. The people and organizations behind the programs and projects featured in this special issue of the quarterly newsletter are among the 43 organizations and 250 individuals contacted by Dr. Spence throughout his trips to the region in 2003. While some of the organizations have adapted Western ways, the individuals and all the organizations used local psychosocial ways, supporting locals engaged in their own self and mutual help. Culturally sensitive local resiliency, competency and wellness-based approaches form the core of the organizations, programs, and projects featured in this special issue. One of the articles does not pertain to any organization, but it details Dr. Spence's experience with a local nurturer in East Timor.

Geoff Guest Aboriginal Youth Living Well Project Equipping the youth to live well

In the remoteness of Northern Australia, a young Aborigine boy could only hope to become a stockman on one of the many cattle stations throughout the area. Along with poor chances for growth and employment, many of the Aboriginal youth in Far North Queensland face varying difficulties ranging from feelings of helplessness and hopelessness to obsessive and destructive behaviors. Many run the risk of inflicting harm on themselves and on others, and even incarceration or psychiatric institutionalization. One of the Aboriginal communities in the Cape York Peninsula was even described as having a "pervasive social dysfunction". Nonetheless, beacons of hope and change still shine for Northern Australia's troubled Aboriginal youth – Geoff Guest and the evolving Aboriginal Youth Living Well Project.

Of Irish and Aboriginal ancestry, Geoff has been providing enabling support for the youth for 23 years, digging funds from out of his own pocket for the first 12 years. His reputation in Australia is beyond words and transcends ethnic barriers and the generation gap. Honored with the Order of Australia for his services to the youth sector, Geoff Guest has been assisting Aboriginal boys to get job skills in being stockmen at his training farm. Using an eclectic melding of indigenous and Western psychologies, Guest supported over 2,500 Aboriginal and Islander youth in more than two decades. Fathers who had Geoff help them years ago are sending their boys to Geoff, who has always been open to receive youths that others have found very difficult or impossible to handle. By providing them vocational experience as a process of change and an atmosphere of community and family conducive for a change in behavior, Guest transformed ringleaders of gangs into positive

role models for other youth. During EEG neurotherapy sessions, the youth get to see their brain waves at work on a computer screen, an activity that the youth enjoyed. Guest attended courses on EEG neurofeedback in Australia, USA, and Germany. His method of combining neurotherapy with a homegrown system of assignments and challenges, encouragement and recognition, traditional and therapeutic storytelling provided the Aboriginal adolescents a broad range of experiences to equip them to live well.

The beacons hope to shine even brighter. Geoff Guest and his wife Norma, with the enabling support of Dr. Spence hope to replicate in the Cape York area an evolving project patterned after the Good Community Living Project, which is evolving in seven Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. Called the Aboriginal Youth Living Well Project, the community-based initiative seeks to involve the cooperative partnership of the Aboriginal and Islander communities, grassroots organizations and individuals in Cape York. Tentatively, it aims to support the colorful playful artistry for social cohesion of youth and adolescents to enable them to live well. The Guests hopes to teach the youth competencies in budgeting and using money well, fishing, horse riding and mustering, the care for horses, maintenance of horse equipment, plaiting and leatherwork. These are aside from teaching them local cultural ways and cultural healing action, the means to help them overcome socio-emotional problems, and how to live a healthy life through maintaining good nutrition and diet, general fitness, health and hygiene. Self and mutual support form the core of the Aboriginal Youth Living Well Project. The evolving project seeks to make use of experienced locals as resource people and of indigenous and intercultural nurturers

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Profile ■

Wathnakpheap (WP)

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Fostering children's rights in Cambodia, Wathnakpheap (WP) espouses a mission to improve opportunities for children living in difficult circumstances and their families. WP promotes community-based self-help initiatives for development through facilitating work for local groups. Its vision is for communities to build Cambodia. WP's projects and activities include community organizing, education and skills training, income generation and employment, and child rights and social welfare. WP offers services such as non-formal education, skills training for livelihood and income generation and technical or vocational skills. It also has small business loans or micro-loans for families. (MPP)

Melaleuca Refugee Center, Torture and Trauma Survivor Service of the Northern Territory, Inc.

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The Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Torture and Trauma Survivors Service of the NT provides an environment for the recovery of survivors of torture and trauma, their families and community, through confidential, high quality, holistic services. The organization conducts initial information and orientation activities for new arrivals to the Northern Territory, ensuring that they are linked to essential services such as English classes, schools, health services, and income support. Aside from counseling and advocacy, the center also provides information to clients to help them understand their post-trauma reactions and to assist settlement in the Northern Territory. The Melaleuca Refugee Centre also conducts group work exploring family and parenting issues and the impact of the refugee experience and resettlement on the family and family dynamics. It also conducts training seminars for the government and NGOs

and volunteers. Under the Offshore Humanitarian Program, the refugee center provides assistance for people who come to Australia because of persecution and torture. (MPP)

Consortium for Assisting the Refugees and Displaced in Indonesia (CARDI)

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CARDI is a non-profit, humanitarian consortium established between the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Stichting Vluchteling. The four members share the same commitment towards refugees and displaced persons. They pooled their resources in order to reduce the suffering of conflict-affected communities and mitigate the effects of internal displacement in Indonesia, while building a stronger civil society. In all of its programs, CARDI provides assistance by promoting self-sufficiency and improving access to basic services, through developing local partnerships and resources. Through the conduct of multi-sectoral programs, CARDI envisions an Indonesia where people of all creeds and ethnic backgrounds can live in peace and harmony. CARDI offers services such as adolescent health and development, funding support, legal rights advocacy, networking, professional education, and skills training. The consortium currently serves the regions of Maluku, North Maluku, and North Sulawesi in Indonesia and the country of Thailand. (MPP) ■

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Special Feature (continued from page 5)

Shortly after my ten-minute demonstration, the battery was charged and I said farewell. Thirty minutes later, I was up waiting in the street market for a bus to the capital Dili. The niece, with two of her female friends at the restaurant and all with interlocked arms, came walking up the street. When they saw me, the niece beamed and said, "You make me so happy!" Then they continued joyfully walking up the street.

Note that the niece, as a natural nurturer and natural networker, approached me in a public place. Aside from the people in the restaurant, many of the children and many of the women bathing and washing clothes saw me. She elected to talk to me and get me going. She also elected to pass on immediately to her friends what sense she made of what I was doing. Other onlookers were so curious. I reckon they would ask the niece what it was about the next time they would see her. Everyone knows everyone in Old Baucau.

**Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA)
 Integrative Theater Arts:
 Nurturing wellness through art and culture**

What would integrative theater arts have to do with psychosocial work and alleviating trauma in post-conflict areas? The answer lies in the more than 30 years of experience of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), which was founded in 1967 as a non-profit, non-stock and non-governmental theater association. During the Marcos dictatorship, the founders of PETA were forced into exile and a new generation of artists and teachers led the theater group to a different thrust: the emergence of a people's theater committed to social change. PETA has since then initiated theater organizing and networking, giving birth to hundreds of drama groups in schools, parishes, communities, sectors, regions and migrant groups in the Philippines and abroad. PETA has supported psychosocial action in Mae Sot near the Thai-Burmese border, in East Timor, in Australian Aboriginal communities in Darwin and Alice Springs, as well as in Nepal and Japan. At the core of all these efforts is "informance".

"Using a small group of mobile theatre performing artists, this method combines drama techniques with participatory and evocative pedagogical tools to draw out critical views and opinions from the audience. It is a powerful tool for issue advocacy. It aims to stimulate the audience, for them to be sensitive and critical in analyzing specific conditions and problems they confront in a manner that is artistic and creative."

Every aspect of a culture or a way of life may be used for nurturing wellness. This may be through music, dance, visual art forms, sculpture, painting, and even play and games and adventure challenges. In general terms, integrative theater arts involve the actively fostering and sustaining of cultural wellbeing. In providing

scope for people to actively engender and promote values, language, practices, modes of action, and the arts, these may in turn facilitate social emancipation, intercultural wellbeing, cultural justice, as well as social and environmental wellbeing. While wellbeing forms the basis of integrative theater arts, issues may both emerge and be resolved, with contexts created to allow states of wellbeing to emerge. Action focuses on what is wanted than on what is not wanted.

The arts and other elements of culture provide opportunities to reflect on everyday social structures and practices. Participants may create short plays, songs and rhythms, poems, stories, dances, murals and postcards and other materials about issues such as torture, trauma, grief, violence and suicide and generate wellbeing acts such as being flexible, mutual supporting, sharing joy and recognition. A strong sense of group and community bonding may develop or be further strengthened. Friends and relatives of the participants are encouraged and often attend the end of the gatherings to experience performances, games, and perhaps, an exhibition of artistic products. Typically, the participants, if ever, rarely participated in artistic expressions.

Furthermore, integrative theater arts activities may provide corrective, remedial, and generative emotional experiences that may lead to the actual healing or resolution of personal and groups concerns during the process of exploring them. At the same time, participants may gain competencies useful in future endeavors. It may create opportunities for exploring inner experience and outer reality. Actively fostering and sustaining cultural wellbeing, integrative theater arts help communities extend its culture as a balance to other communities, and as such, becomes a movement for intercultural reconciliation and wellbeing.

While casual observers may see it only as a curious mix of childlike activities where adults, adolescents and children sing songs, engage in artwork, and play games, there is more to integrative theater arts than what is perceived by the senses. Through it, people begin exploring new ways of being in the world together and in the process, internalize and help bring about change. (MPP) ■

Regional Psychosocial Network (continued from page 1)

the REPRIT is that a strong and proactive network of organizations can be relied upon to deliver rapid psychosocial care in times of emergencies in the region." She added that the REPRIT coming into reality would be a great help to countries like East Timor, Cambodia, and other areas which had seen war and natural or man-made disasters, with the outbreak of violence in southern Thailand in April 2004 as the most recent. (MPP) ■

Loving Wisdom in Action

Dr. Les Spencer PhD (Can.); BBSoc; BSSc.

During the decade long conflict that ravaged through Bougainville the Rataiku people of the South of Bougainville lived in peace with everyone - living a way of life that sustains wellbeing. What is the essence of this way of life.

'Rataiku' simultaneously means a distinct people, place, language, way of life, and way of relating with loving wisdom, and most importantly, being and doing all of the foregoing. The name is pronounced 'Rat Tay E Que' where the underlined segments are stressed. Rataiku as 'place' is only a 300 acres clearing in the bottom of a valley surrounded by thick jungle. The dense terrain holds them close together. There are dwellings for 700 people with gardens interspersed. In the centre is a sports field - a place where many other Bougainville people have chosen to hold reconciliation ceremonies.

From Rataiku, narrow paths radiate in five directions. Apart from these paths, the jungle is so dense, no one can roam more than a few metres into it. The five paths go to the communities of five different language groups. The Rataiku are in the centre. Every Rataiku speaks Rataiku and each of the other five languages.

Rataiku land ownership is matrilineal. The Rataiku females marry into families within each of the five language groups, thereby establishing clan affiliations between these five groups and the Rataiku people.

Rataiku is the source of three highly prized commodities - special nuts that grow only in Rataiku, a special fibre tree - used for making carry bags - that also only grows in their village and high grade pottery. All five language groups travel to Rataiku to trade items for these three commodities.

Rataiku chiefs are respected. They have the sense to read the community. Rataiku people follow the chiefs ideas that he has absorbed from them. However, chiefs behave as they are first among equals. If chiefs from any of the neighbouring five peoples visit their village, Rataiku Chiefs humbly disappear to the gardens and allow others to be hosts.

A central concept for the Rataiku is 'haharusingo'. It means 'loving wisdom in action'. Another is 'horuro' meaning 'visiting

to give'. A third concept is 'apaapaatu' meaning 'visiting to give and receive'. Respectful humour and jokes are a pervasive part of Rataiku life and hearty belly laughs ring out through the valley during day and night.

All carry-bags and their contents belong to all Rataiku. Anyone returning from their gardens with fresh vegetables will share the contents with everyone they meet on the way home. They meet others with carry bags so all get a bit of everyone's produce.

During the Bougainville conflict, the population swelled to three times the size as people sought refuge there. Rataiku as 'sanctuary' was never violated by the PNG forces, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) or any faction. Rataiku was *always* respected despite awful atrocities occurring throughout the Island. Despite the chaos elsewhere on Bougainville, the conflict had little impact on the Rataiku way of life. On one occasion early in the conflict the PNG forces swept into the valley. After being with the Rataiku only a few days, they recognized they had no reason to be in this special place and they all packed up and left. Rataiku 'haharusingo' or loving wisdom in action had worked its way with them. With all of these refugees coming and going in successive waves, the Rataiku way of life was unchanged. The Rataiku people are universal described as 'good people'.

A few thousand years ago Aristotle in his book 'The Nicomachean Ethics' wrote of practical wisdom linked to action sustaining wellbeing. It seems that the Rataiku a living with the merging of shared practical wisdom in loving relating with each other intergenerationally. ■

ERRATUM

On page 1, Volume 2. No.3 (July-September 2003) of our newsletter, we identified They Chan To, Mao Sok Kim and Loong Boom as the representatives from the Cambodia Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), when they were actually from Cambokids. The TPO representative met by Dr. Spence was Mr. Kang Sang. Our apologies for the error.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Southeast Asia/ Human Rights Watch International community calls for investigation on killings of youth and use of excessive force in southern Thailand

On April 30, 2004, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers called for an immediate and independent investigation into the killings of scores of youth. Many of those killed during clashes with Thailand's security forces in the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla are believed to be below 18 years of age. Reports said that most of them were armed with machetes and some were carrying rifles. "Even if involved in violence, ambushing and killing groups of children is extreme and appears to be an excessive use of lethal force," said Casey Kelso, Coordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. "We ask that the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra immediately investigate these terrible events."

The Coalition also expressed concern about reports that children are being linked to the violence that has erupted in the three predominantly Moslem southern Thailand provinces, and that they could be recruited to non-state armed groups. The Coalition called upon non-state actors in southern Thailand to refrain from recruiting and engaging children in armed conflicts. Bangkok meanwhile blamed the violence on local criminals, but Thai police and foreign security sources said that the attackers were Muslim separatists.

The organization's call for an investigation came a day after the Human Rights Watch called on the Thai government to investigate the use of lethal force by military and police forces in controlling the situation in southern Thailand. "The response of the security forces appear to have been disproportionate and may have harmed civilians or put them at risk, especially when heavily armed security forces stormed into the Kruesie Mosque in Pattani," said Brad Adams, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division.

On April 28, Thai security forces assaulted the mosque after a six-hour siege, ending in the death of more than 30 people. The assault topped a series of events beginning with the simultaneous pre-dawn attack by youth on a police station

and ten police outposts. This incident resulted in the death of five law enforcement officers, and the arrest of seventeen people, including some under-18s. Fighting continued throughout the day after police and army forces responded with heavy gunfire, killing 108 people. It was the bloodiest day in predominantly Moslem southern Thailand since violence broke out in January. (MPP)

SEA Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Southeast Asia/ UNICEF-EAPRO Regional Workshop Held in Bangkok March 2004

From March 22 to 24, 2004, the Southeast Asia Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the UNICEF-East Asia and Pacific Regional Office conducted in Bangkok a workshop on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and rehabilitation (DDRR) of children involved in armed conflict in East Asia and the Pacific. The aim of the workshop was to enhance efforts for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation in the region, particularly looking at the situation of children involved in armed conflicts in Indonesia, Burma (Myanmar), and the Philippines. Around sixty participants and observers representing non-governmental organizations, information groups, the donor community, regional and international organizations and United Nations agencies attended the three-day workshop.

A follow-up activity to the research on children and armed conflict in the region, the workshop, held at the Landmark Hotel, was an opportunity for local, regional and international organizations to learn, build capacity, network and collaborate on programs for children involved in armed conflict. Among others, the workshop tackled specific concerns, like legal and policy frameworks and the protection of children involved in armed conflict; and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict as an advocacy tool in the demobilization process. Other themes in the workshop included juvenile justice in post-conflict environments, and strategy development for enhanced programming related to demobilization of children. (MPP) ■

Special News Feature... (continued from page 2)

as deemed appropriate by the community. The full participation of the local people in the project is crucial to help their children saddle up to living well, culturally, socio-emotionally, physically, and financially. For more information about the evolving project, please contact Geoff and Norma Guest through enabler@paradigm4.com.au. (MPP)

Cambokids "Friends in the Joyful Awakening of Wisdom"

In an enchanting corner in the dusty back streets of Phnom Penh, around 120 children come to play in the mornings and afternoons. At the entrance, children wade their fingers and other parts of their bodies in jars filled with water. Others gleefully spend their time in the sandboxes or the swings. Some of the children, even as young as two, avidly follow the exquisite moves by a young volunteer from the Cambodian National Dance Academy. Others engage in spontaneous play and storytelling activities. In the latter, an adult storyteller retells the stories made by the children using a small drum to evoke the mood. Such games and activities are allowing the children to heal themselves from the psychological aspects of a cycle of armed conflict that claimed a third of the population in a genocidal campaign by the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s, almost destroying Cambodian culture. Once a vacant lot, this enchanting playground is Cambokids, an NGO whose name embodies the essence of the group's healing artistry: "Friends in the Joyful Awakening of Wisdom".

Cambokids is evolving models for the development of games and activities to help the healing of children and to break the cycle of inter-generational transfer of trauma. By creating a safe and delightful space for children and conducting play, games and activities within a community of children supported by adolescent volunteers, Cambokids hopes to help the children gain their resilience and the capacity for thriving in wellness. The people in Cambokids found out that during play, games, and activities to develop artistry, the children naturally process and let go the stress and anxiety they experience in their families and communities.

Always with careful supervision, the existential activities introduce the children to the four elements: water, wind, earth, and (very limitedly) fire. These activities reconnect the children to their existence, helping them explore body-feelings. Through the help of the adolescent volunteers or the "older brothers and sisters" at the center, and with the support of the elders, the children develop these activities. These form a core for a community process inducing care and responsibility between generations. For this, Cambokids conducts workshops to prepare volunteers in working with the

children. Immediately after a half-hour or one-hour session and under the supervision of the more experienced volunteers and trainers, the volunteers put the ideas into action as they interact with the children, who are taught simple rules, such as "no violence or violent games", "no competitiveness", and "respect for differences". In time, the playground would not have only awaken wisdoms, but nurtured new generations of Cambodians who are able to break the cycle of violence, and to heal and transform the nation. For more information about Cambokids, please visit cambokids@bigpond.com.kh. (MPP)

Baucau, East Timor Networking in public places By Dr. Les Spence

This article demonstrates how a local nurturer seeking healing ways may approach an outside enabler, and when the natural nurturer experiences them from the enabler, she immediately adapts them and passes them on in her friendship network.

In my role as network consultant, I was in a restaurant, just below the street market in the heart of Old Baucau, East Timor. It had large open windows, and people outside can easily see in. This restaurant is also in the middle of the most public space in the center of town. The children come to play marbles, hopscotch, and other games under the giant shade trees as their mothers wash clothes, bath and collect water from the springs coming from a rock in the corner. It is a 150 yards from the building used by the militia as a torture center a few years ago. The spring water also runs down to the swimming pool used by the children. Also, older youth gather to watch the younger ones play soccer in the nearby primary school playgrounds.

While charging my video battery in the restaurant, one of the women introduced herself as the niece of one of the locals I met the previous day. She said that her uncle had mentioned about the reason of my visit and she asked me to show her some simple healing ways. I showed her the relation between feelings, emotion and movement. From relaxed position, I slowly moved to one that was typical of lethargy and despair, and then I slowly returned to a relaxed position. In the local language, she immediately spoke to her friends and the others in the restaurant detailing her understanding of what she had just seen. She asked me to do more. Sequentially, I moved in and out of depression, grief, morbidity, chronic fatigue, terror, and aggression, and each time I returned to a relaxed state or symmetrical elongation. After each sequence, the niece detailed her understanding to the others. Apart from the brief scene-setting statement at the start of the demonstration, I did not speak. I gave no explanations or theories during and after the demonstration. They all observed my moving and sensed my shifting feelings, emotions, and energies. The important thing was they saw how I could easily shift out of aversive postures back to relaxed energized state of wellness.