

Some Aspects of Coping and Resilience

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Abstract This paper presents an introduction to the two concepts of coping and resilience, with their varied dimension. In order to unravel the concepts, the paper begins with brief narratives that show how individuals, groups, communities and nations display both coping and resilience every day. The analysis, then shifts to the meaning of every-day stress and adversity that are inevitable parts of our daily jigsaw puzzle of life, defines the contexts of coping and resilience and brings in strengths perspective into resiliency and finally signals the efficacy of an inner strengths approach. Part of this was previously published in a book entitled 'Perspectives on coping and resilience', published earlier by authorspress 2013

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The Collective Stories

Bwera is a Ugandan city on the banks of the Rubirihiya River separates the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, east of the Beni region. Ugandans and Congolese sell from the same stalls. They all discuss products and prices in "Kinande," their shared mother tongue but carry transactions in shillings on the Ugandan side, and in francs on the Congolese one. The same merchants do their market rounds on both sides of the border. Truck drivers with bananas and palm oil from the Congo cross the border and unload their merchandise in Uganda, but on the other side of the border, they show Ugandan ID papers. The same goes for the Ugandan drivers who enter the Congo through Kasindi. When they go through customs loaded with beer, bags of grey cement, corn starch and other products, they pull out Congolese ID, which exempt them from certain taxes ((Kokonyange & Syfia International, 2012). This is a fundamental example

of coping and resilience.

Amidst cross border tensions, fears of militancy, constant destabilization people continue to live in the strife-torn border districts of Jammu in India. At sunrise they move to their fields and till their farms and return to their homes as the sun sets. These people remain cautiously apprehensive about an unpredictable future and the mood of most people living in these towns and villages is summarized as: how far can one run from one's own land? Again, this is coping and resilience.

While recession continues to hurt business around the globe, many industries in India have come out unscathed. Among BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), China and India never went into recession. Brazil briefly did, but its recovery appeared pretty strong. India defied the global recession by posting a very healthy GDP growth rate of 7% in the past. The fact that the Indian industry, so far, has remained insulated from the global recession can be attributed to its value systems, entrepreneurship and its spiritual traditions and coping and resilient entrepreneurship (Panchanatham, 2011). Panchanatham acclaims these above characteristics to spell the competitive edge for India. These qualities might also be described as 'ingredients' of coping and resilience

The Individual Stories

Over the years I heard these two terms, coping and resilience, resonate quite clearly through various conversations and brave narratives of people that I acquainted. There was something heroic about some of them, but with some others it was plain and simple. Their strategies for plain survival recognize an essential will to move on and thrive. A few amongst them recognized a will to flourish and move ahead. Tewodros Fekadu, a friend of mine, an artist, community worker and a writer now lives on the Gold Coast in Australia. Teddy, as he is fondly called, recounted the challenges and triumphs of surviving a poverty-stricken childhood in the streets of Ethiopia.

With the backdrop of the civil war he spent years as an orphan, struggled with his loneliness - his only companion - and the need for love. His life brought him as a refugee to Japan for another ten years until he moved as a more permanent refugee to Australia. His journey spanned five countries and three continents, with sometimes meaningless and sometimes meaningful contact with the Catholic Church, the police, the law and life in Japanese detention centres. His story is a story of family love - unacknowledged by his wealthy father - and his pride and being abandoned by his desperate, poor mother, but is also a story of one man's defiance and triumph, that is beautifully presented in a book called, 'No One's Son' (Fekadu, 2012).

John Dommett told me his story of how epilepsy and a misdiagnosis of intellectual disability in his case upshot very quickly into a loss of his social roles and his dreams and brought the end that resulted in an assumption of incompetence, rapid devalued status and an income of 20 dollars a fortnight from a sheltered workshop and how many years it took him to reclaim his life (Dommett, 2010)

Pamela Trotman and Leisha Townson, social workers, featured in this book had conversations with me around tapping the inner resource or their inherent inner energy that they described as 'survivor self' that continues to exist before, during and after a traumatic event (Trotman & Townson, 2012).

Group Stories

A few years ago, Braj Bhushan, talked to me about how elderly men and women handle anxiety, depression, somatization and cognitive competence rather proactively in India, while Coralie Graham, in her conversations at a conference talked about the adaptability, positive outlook that predicted better mental health of the elderly men and women in Australia (Bhushan, 2010; Graham, 2010). Anne Riggs, an art therapist talked about people living on the brink of suicide and how she observed her subjects delve into what hurts, disturbs and stultifies in order to offer something back that reveals, transforms and restores (Riggs, 2010) In all the above narratives bounciness, emerges and is best understood as a process and also as an idea more typically referred to as "resiliency". (Leadbeater et al., 2005)

The central message from the above stories is that recovery from any calamity does not involve restoration of the status quo but instead requires development of pathways leading forward to possible and some newly carved and preferred futures. In response to both man-made and natural disasters, individuals and collectives of people face the challenge of 'What now? What next?' amidst the damage, loss and most often irrevocable changes. We are witness to profound and unanticipated disruptions of all sorts playing out again and

again around the globe. Compelling questions and concerns arising from this stream of natural and manmade disasters are: What helps people cope with disaster? What aids them in their recovery? What factors support capacity for individuals and communities to build positive futures 'out of the ashes'?

Stress and Coping

The two central themes common to all of the above living stories are coping and resilience. The purpose of this paper is to tease these two concepts with their diverse dimensions and disentangle the elements that come within their conceptualizations. A place to start this conversation is with the stresses and strains that we have all experienced. Life is not often like still waters. I have always thought there are ripples whose sound and gaze we miss under the still waters. In most simple terms, stress is a load, a burden that one can carry without a disruption, but it can tear a muscle or stretch our emotional abilities as we struggle to withstand its weight. Thus, there are sudden, acute stresses that we can see and can describe and there are others that we might not feel in the beginning, but whose symptoms slowly appear. Stress, adversity and challenge have become inevitable parts of our daily jigsaw puzzle of life - and sometimes out of control.

However, the way we think about stress appears to me as being very much in our control and this could make a big difference in how we can handle ourselves when we find ourselves at the cross roads of unseen stresses. Some people feel helpless in the face of stress and adversity and easily give up attempts to change or improve their conditions while others manage and move on. Research is suggesting that an option exists. People can learn to cope and resiliency can be acquired (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Revich & Shatté, 2002; Schneider, 2001; Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978; Siegel, 1999). The types of stress reactions that are noticed across various stages of life appear to be physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioural and starting with childhood these reactions vary by age, maturity and exposure.

According to Folkman & Lazarus (1984), managing stress includes accepting, tolerating, avoiding or minimizing the stressor as well as gaining mastery over the environment that seems to be the central processes in the management of stress. Anything that we do to adjust to the challenges and demands of stress, by way of adjustments made to reduce the impacts of stress, could be defined as coping. Thus, coping can be viewed as constant changes in our cognitions and the use of behavioural effort to mitigate both external internal demands that are appraised as 'taxing' (Cummings, 1991) or 'exceeding the resources of the person' (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Do early life stressful events produce a better rate of resilience in later life? DuMont, Widom and Czaja (2007) reported from their

study of a large sample size (n=676) that resilience that was evident throughout adolescents and early adult life was associated with a low rate of stressful life events. They also reported paradoxically, that those who became resilient only after adolescence had experienced more negative life events, so therefore it may not be conclusively said that stressful events provide life experience with positive steeling effects or negative effects that evade psychological resources (DuMont et al., 2007)

Coping is also explained as conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize or tolerate stress or conflict (Snyder, 1999; Weiten, & Lloyd; 2008 Zeidner, & Endler, 1996). In literature on coping there are a number of adaptive or constructive coping strategies, i.e., those strategies that appear to be reactive to stress and that reduce stress levels. This contrasts with proactive coping, in which a coping response aims to head off a future stressor.

Coping Strategies

Coping responses are partly controlled by personality (habitual traits), but also partly by the social context, particularly the nature of the stressful environment (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). While there are a number of ways by which people cope, most of these mechanisms can be classified as:

- Adaptive or appraisal coping
- Problem-focused
- Emotion-focused

The basic distinctions are often made between various contrasting strategies, for example: problem-focused versus emotion-focused; engagement versus disengagement; cognitive versus behavioural. Weiten (2008) has provided a useful summary of three broad types of coping strategies:

- appraisal-focused (adaptive cognitive),
- problem-focused: Any coping behaviour that is directed at reducing or eliminating a stressor, adaptive behavioural
- emotion-focused: Directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction to stressor

Appraisal-focused strategies assist with personal modifications of the way we think occur when the person modifies the way they think, for example: employing denial, or distancing oneself from the problem. People may alter the way they think about a problem by altering their goals and values, such as by seeing the humour in a situation. Laughter Yoga is being taught around the world today as a simple and profound. An exercise routine, it is sweeping the world and is a complete wellbeing workout. The brainchild of Dr. Madan Kataria an Indian Physician has forwarded laughter as the best medicine and clinical research on Laughter Yoga methods, conducted at the

University of Graz in Austria; Bangalore, India; and in the United States has proved that Laughter lowers the level of stress hormones (epinephrine, cortisol, etc) in the blood. It fosters a positive and hopeful attitude. It is less likely for a person to succumb to stress and feelings of depression and helplessness, if one is able to laugh away the troubles (Kataria, M, Laughter Yoga International. (2012).

Meditation for instance and practice of mindfulness are seen not only as techniques to calm one's emotions, but to bring humanity to feel 'together' as these two techniques assist acquiring inner quietness and peace and bring some sense of balance in oneself.

- Problem Focused Coping
- Emotion Focused Coping

Depending upon individual perceptions and the nature of stress, people combine the above coping strategies. While both seem to have their own advantages, counsellors and social workers tend to work with and encourage problem-focused coping mechanisms as it allows for a greater perception of individual control over one's own problem, while emotion-focused coping may lead to a reduction in perceived control.

Folkman and Lazarus (1984) identified five emotion-focused coping strategies

- disclaiming
- escape-avoidance
- accepting responsibility or blame
- exercising self-control
- positive reappraisal

They also highlight problem-focused coping strategies. Seeking social support attends to the problem. "...taking action to try to get rid of the problem is a problem-focused strategy, but so is making a list of the steps to take". Lazarus notes, "... the connection between his idea of 'defensive reappraisals' or cognitive coping and Freud's concept of 'ego-defenses' coping strategies thus overlap with a person's defense mechanisms. Anticipatory Coping is also known as proactive coping. Society makes great efforts in this direction. City councils remind us to prepare for summers as well as monsoons, but there is a limited amount that individuals can do to reduce the stress of some difficult challenge just by anticipation.

Stoerber & Janssen (2011) examine the benefits of positive reframing as an adaptive strategy. Their research focused on the issue of perfectionism and the benefits of cognitively reframing negative attitudes by questioning the perfectionist expectation and criticism. This is another pathway into opening up new ways of thinking that solve problems by erasing the thoughts that are creating the problem. Religious coping has been found to be the most common coping response, with one study reporting that 17% use religion as a coping response. Women mentioned religious coping more frequently than did men

Maladaptive Coping

Due to work and life stresses people also tend to adopt negative or maladaptive coping. While adaptive coping methods improve functioning, a maladaptive coping mechanism may assist in immediate symptomatic reduction, but maintains and even contributes to the growth of the disorder. Maladaptive techniques can seem to be effective in the short term, which can give the false impression of being a successful technique, but maladaptive processes will fail as a long-term coping process.

Examples of maladaptive behaviour strategies include dissociation, desensitization, reckless behaviours; anxious avoidance and escape behaviours including as over consumption of alcohol as well as self-medication and doping. Unfortunately, such maladaptive coping mechanism interferes with the person's ability to unlearn, or break away the existing relationship between the presenting problem and the associated symptoms. They only exacerbate to serve and to maintain the disorder. Dissociation is the ability of the mind to separate and compartmentalize thoughts, memories, and emotions. This is often associated with Post Traumatic stress. Further examples of maladaptive coping strategies include: self-distraction, denial, substance use and self-blame.

Do Women Cope Better?

Gender differences in coping strategies are the ways in which men and women differ in managing psychological stress. There is evidence that males often develop stress due to their careers, whereas females often encounter stress due to issues in interpersonal relationships (Wang et al., 2007). In general, such differences as exist indicate that women tend to employ emotion-focused coping and the response to stress, whereas men appear to be utilizing more of problem-focused coping and the response, perhaps because societal standards encourage men to be more individualistic, while women are often expected to be interpersonal. Whether or not this has anything to do with the genetic composition of is still debated, thus preferences in coping strategies are seen as a result of social conditioning and child-rearing: for instance, as boys as they grow up are encouraged to be independent, while girls are expected to comply, which may influence each gender's choice of coping mechanism.

Hormones also play a part in stress management. Cortisol, a stress hormone, was found to be elevated in males during stressful situations. In females, however, the same hormone levels were decreased in stressful situations, and instead, an increase in limbic activity was discovered. Many researchers believe that these results underlie the reasons why men administer a fight-or-flight reaction to stress; whereas, females have a tend-and-befriend reaction. The "fight-or-flight" response activates the sympathetic nervous system in the form of increased focus levels,

adrenaline, and epinephrine (Wang et al., 2007). However, the "tend-and-befriend" reaction refers to the tendency of women to protect their offspring and relatives. These qualities can well be discussed as coping mechanisms, but it is important not to forget the quality of resilience and how this is intertwined in the processes of management of stress and adversity management.

Resilience – redefined

In most simple term's "resilience" refers to the notion of an individual's predisposition to cope with stress and adversity. This coping may result in the individual "bouncing back" to a previous state of normal functioning, or simply not showing negative effects (Masten, 2009). Resilience crops up in situations of adversity and risk and negative life circumstances that are known to lead to poor outcomes (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). There are several theories and approaches that seek to address and promote resilience. Current research suggests that interventions need to address both individual and environmental factors. Such an approach allows for a holistic multi-systemic approach supports all ages and all situations (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Ungar, 2011; Walsh, 2006).

While individualized interventions seek to strengthen a person in resisting and persisting through adversity sometimes individual may also require suitability of behavioural changes in combination with interventions to affect the immediate social environment of the person (Jaffee et al., 2007). A similar view is expressed by Walsh (2006) who supports multisystemic, strengths-based understanding of family resilience and interventions that reign in the frontier of social and social cultural ecology. Most writings in resilience refer to the result of individuals being able to interact with their environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra et al., 2010).

Another form of resilience, referred to as posttraumatic growth, is discussed by Richard Hill (2012) in this book. Traumatic affects that impact the foundation of safety and security of an individual leaving the sufferer floundering in an unfamiliar and unsafe psychosocial environment (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2006; Hill, 2012). Adversity, dealt with in this positive, strength-based way can lead to better functioning, making it possible for us to relate to resilience as more of a process exhibited by an individual in reaction to a situation rather than just an innate trait of an individual (Rutter, 2008). Recently there has also been interesting evidence that resilience can indicate a capacity to resist a sharp decline in functioning even though a person temporarily appears to get worse (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Castro & Murray, 2010). Sometimes, what we see in surface behaviour may not be a true reflection of the inner workings of resilience.

Commonly used explanations about resilience are hardiness, resourcefulness, and mental toughness, but it

may be that a wiser way of looking at resilience is to see it as a dynamic process whereby individuals exhibit positive behavioural alternation when one encounters major adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even considerable sources of stress. It is different from innate strengths that individuals, groups and communities or entire populations possess regardless of the level of adversity they face. Under adversity, assets function differently (e.g. a good school, or parental monitoring) and can have a great deal more influence in the life of a child from a poorly resourced background than one from a wealthy home with other options for support, recreation, and self-esteem (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Thus “resilience” is defined here as the ability to produce an individual biological, psychological and social resistance through adaptation that produces the strengths within to fight the adversity to withstand a crisis. Thus, in medium term it should produce the ability to fight back.

Constructing Resilience

For the purposes of this paper we will view resilience as a two-dimensional construct that concerns itself with exposure to adversity and resultant positive adjustment (Ungar, 2004). This two-dimensional construct implies two judgments: one about a "positive adaptation" and the other about the significance of risk (or adversity). One point of view about adversity could define it as any risks associated with negative life conditions that are statistically related to adjustment difficulties, such as poverty, children of mothers with conditions of mental illness or families and communities that have experienced disasters.

Positive adaptation, on the other hand, must demonstrate behaviours that suggest social competency after witnessing distressing events. Once again, such competencies differ from society to socially and suggest vast differences across cultures as well. In a previous study Pulla and Bharadwaj looked at the ‘love thy neighbour’ community resiliency demonstrated by Mumbai residents in India on three occasions in the city: the dreadful bomb explosions in Mumbai suburban trains in 2006 that claimed 188 lives; the devastating floods of 2007 when the city was halted for 6 days; and the and 26/11 terror attacks of 2008 that shook global humanity. These events raised three questions: Is resilience an expression of mutual generosity; is it remarkable heroisms in the face of adversity and crisis; and finally, is resilience historically a public resource for solace? (Pulla & Bharadwaj, 2010).

Ungar and his colleagues at the Resilience Research Centre (2008, 2012) argue that this standard definition of resilience could be problematic because it does not adequately account for cultural and contextual differences in how people in other systems express resilience. They have shown that cultural and contextual factors exert a great deal of influence on the factors that affect resilience

amongst population. Resilience has been shown to be more than just the capacity of individuals to cope well under adversity often localized to those societies where adversity occurred. Resilience, as ‘public resource of solace’, does not appear to be an indefinitely renewable when crisis hits the world today and links Mumbai, Kashmir, Madrid, London, Karachi, Wall Street and Washington, together (Pulla & Bharadwaj, 2010). Thus, resilience is better understood as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that may pull together during crisis and provide them an opportunity and capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for life following adversity in appropriate and culturally meaningful ways.

Most recent researchers on resilience have devoted to discovering the protective factors that explain people’s adaptation to adverse conditions, in various situations. For example a sample of areas in which research has been carried on in recent years includes homelessness and health in a nationwide Australian study (Nirui, 2010); refugees resettlement in third countries, (Murray, 2010); natural disasters, (Hargreaves, 2010); natural calamities such as drought on vulnerable populations with disabilities, (Crichton & Chenoweth, 2010) and manmade disasters such as 26/11 in Mumbai, (Pulla & Bharadwaj, 2010). The focus of empirical work then has been shifted to understand the underlying protective processes.

Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy in their latest book, *Resilience: Why things bounce back* (2012), bring in a radically new definition of resilience in rather simple words: ‘if we cannot control the volatile tides of change, we can learn to build better boats. We can design- and redesign - organizations, institutions and systems to better absorb disruption, operate under a wider variety of conditions, and shift more fluidly from one circumstance to the next’.

The illustration at the end of this essay summarizes to me that resilience expectations in all human endeavour have considerably changed and there is not a reservoir of resilience from which we can draw upon in all adversities.

Thus, in these days of turbulence, the ability of people, communities and the systems to maintain their ‘core purpose integrity’ (Zolli, & Healy, 2012) amid unforeseen shocks and surprises expect of us to adapt successfully in spite of experiencing risk factors. There are always challenges in this fragile world of ours, we have persistent poverty, increased susceptibilities to human disease and pestilence, climate changes and growing lack of paid employment that could possibly prevent poverty. While in the west equality, solidarity and social justice, true cornerstones of post-war welfare states are being replaced by inequality, exposing differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between natives and foreigners, rich and poor, those on top and those at the bottom (Leskošek 2005: 247), these differences are likely to grow further asking for more creative ways of ensuring a purpose life and a life.

In my experience as a social worker in floods and community recovery in Queensland, Australia, I often found it was useful to work and facilitate competency development to cope with stress effectively and in a healthy manner. Locating the strengths in clients that we work with such as their problem-solving skills, their ability to seek help in addition to their capacity to offer help to others were very important. Reflecting back on earth quake in Latur, Maharashtra, in India, a country where there are no social security measures for people except some immediate relief measures, it was amazing to see how people bounce back to some form of normal routine. One of the lessons that I brought back to Australia from India was that most people in that earthquake developed an identity of a survivor rather than a victim. Those stories that I heard about how they had a miraculous escape and their inner spirituality that made them reach others allowed them to build stronger bonds after such traumatic experience.

Certain aspects of religions/spirituality may, hypothetically, promote or hinder certain psychological virtues that increase resilience. Research has established connection between spirituality and resilience. Indeed, there is a suggestion that modern western cultures have become neglectful of family and thereby reduce opportunities for children to acquire spirituality and resilience. Further, Benson & Thistlethwaite (2008), argue that Western culture and thus its communities have become focused on perfection and fail to view "pain, suffering, mistakes and failure" as normal components of life. Financial and personal successes are now valued and failure is not viewed as a learning experience that improves problem solving skills.

'This has led to increased feelings of guilt and shame for many Westerners who are unable to acknowledge mistakes and mend relationships. This in turn has led to reduced community and empathy for others and increased feelings of hopelessness and reduced connections to others.' (Benson & Thistlethwaite, 2008, p.94)

The suggestion that people are now learning skills of resilience (problem solving, self-belief, realistic expectations, confronting mistakes and relationship skills) from psychotherapists, social workers rather than family, society and culture as these traditional supports are becoming less effective or are no longer available is certainly not questionable.

The Strengths Perspective and Resiliency

'The strengths perspective does not require one to discount the grip and thrall of addictions or the humiliating, frightening anguish of child abuse, or the unbidden disorganization and confusion of psychosis. But from the vantage point of a strengths perspective, it is as wrong to deny the possible just as it is to deny the problem. And the strengths perspective does decry the intemperate reign of

psychopathology and illness as the central civic, moral, and medical categorical imperative. Adherents of the strength's perspective do not believe, with good reason, that most people who are the victims of abuse or their own rampant appetites, or that all people who have been traumatized inevitably become damaged goods' (Saleebey, 2000).

That the world has adversity and it produces challenges which are associated with diverse negative consequences is accepted. Nevertheless, despite negative outcomes predicted and making our lives functional ensuring that there is a purpose, sense of wellbeing and meaning in life, communities and organizations is the whole purpose of utilizing the strengths approach to resiliency development in people. It starts with the primordial recognition that everybody has the capacity for resiliency and that everybody can bounce back.

Masten (2001) affirms, "[w]hat began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resiliency does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities" (p. 235).

This view point represents the shift from a pathological preoccupation with risk. Most of us manage to have positive lives and develop successfully; including the most challenged ones from troubled families and disadvantaged communities. Even if we were to see this only in the context of children most research shows that an average of 70% to 75 % of children who seemed at a greater risk for later problems to make it and make it well (Benard, 2004). As strengths practitioner I believe that all human processes have the intrinsic capacity to direct people toward a healthy development and to bring their full potential. By utilizing a strengths perspective that allows them to assess attainable goals, mobilizes resources to promote change and self-esteem, and finally become resilient. Common to resiliency theory and the Strengths Perspective is the faith in human beings' capacity to cope and design his or her future. Social workers and counsellors who are interested in this perspective, and committed to the core values of their profession challenge to explore their attitudes, beliefs, biases, and their own selves in order to generate a shift in the way they perceive themselves, their clients, and their relationship with them.

Approaching Inner Strengths

Be it coping or resiliency development, the core business in our societies today, we seek empowering alternatives to traditional methods. Our attention is to facilitate change by helping to look at what has worked, what does not work and what might work presently. It is important for those who facilitate and those desiring change to be integral to this process of change. As helping professionals, we pride ourselves with the skill set to deal with our existence and

manifestations of the state of un-satisfactoriness; suffering; stress; anxieties and tensions (Pulla, 2010).

I am aware that the Buddhist perspective presents a couple of themes that appear to me as being useful in influencing human behaviour. They are internalized verbalizations and visualizations. Internal verbalizations are the talk and chatter that constantly invade the human consciousness while internal visualizations are mental pictures that are produced in the human mind. Therapists believe both need taming. One method of taming internal verbalizations is to overwhelm them and replace them with diversions including mindfulness, meditative practices, engaging in good companionships and suitable conversations (Pulla, 2010). The taming of internal visualizations is to constantly hold in one's mind a higher image of him or her-self, even an imaginary higher image for the moment that one is comfortable with. With the taming of the 'swinging monkey' there is a possibility to draw into the present instead of living in the past. We do need a paradigm shift: seeking solutions from inside to seeking solutions from outside. Would the process of seeking solutions from within be at the level of the individual, group or collective or society is a matter of detail. But inward looking demands a rigorous approach altogether.

My recent visits and conversations in Tuzla and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina with mental health professionals confirm that a great number of people are withdrawing into the past, but I also saw a growing number of people attempting to reduce their stresses and anxieties through acceptance of events as they are rather than as what they would like them to be. It appears to me that we need to work on our capabilities as helping professionals to engage in conversations that allow us to go into the cause that leads us to the rot that is currently manifested in the world. Perhaps we need to ask this question in a different way: Are we actually perpetuating and indulging in coping and resilience skills to deal with effects and neglecting a discourse on returning to the causes of the effects in the first place? For the last five years I have been working on these themes and pondering over the roots of our business in human services and I started feeling that we are losing the plot. Problems appear to be more fundamental: The gradual erosion of human values, few people's greed over many people's need, anomie and the growth of human alienation in our civil societies are some of the main issues that we are not dealing with.

These are problems we need to confront. How do people live with economic and social inequality? The short answer is that they don't, not if they can help it. They walk miles, dragging their bodies and meagre possessions including children in the hope of finding food, water and safety. They have done that for many years in many parts of Africa. Or brave the seas in dinghies to afar shores, miles away from their countries of birth. While being compassionate may be virtuous, practice of obligatory compassion in the face of

illegitimate suffering, appears to me as a cop out that converts societal guilt into a false responsibility.

As helping professionals with an obligatory humanitarian and social justice response to human suffering, we also need to wake up to our professional responsibilities to see the truth, i.e. the ultimate cause of suffering in the world today. The task is in front of us and I am sure we are capable of moving center stage not only to show how people organize themselves in the face of suffering and global inequality today but how this might be made more just. This involves a fundamental critique of current practices and use of the opportunity to ponder over the roots of our crisis and make decisions about 'where to from here'.

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