

Two Paths To Development

Those of us who want to lead human services away from hurting the people who rely on them and toward decent responses to their situation need to learn to walk two paths. The path of detachment leads to decisions to withdraw our investment in practices that undermine community by increasing social devaluation. The path of creation leads to commitment to strengthen community.

What we learn on each path strengthens our ability to walk on the other. If we try to create without learning the lessons of detachment we are likely to recreate destructive patterns. If we stay too long on the path of detachment, we alienate ourselves from the joy and pain of creation and deprive people with handicaps of our energy.

Detachment

- Deeper appreciation of the effects of devaluing cultural and social patterns on the lives of people with handicaps. Realizing the vulnerabilities of people who occupy a devalued social role.
- Recognition that ordinary service practices confirm the people who use them in devalued roles and increase their vulnerability by maintaining social distance, offering fragmented help of little relevance, and amplifying prejudiced beliefs. Realizing the many negative effects of present service practices.
- Surfacing the service assumptions, policies, program models and practices that create negative effects. Realizing that negative effects are created by the way services are designed.
- Withdrawing energy from service forms and activities that are recognized as hurtful.

Creation

- Deeper appreciation of the gifts, contributions, and possibilities of people with handicaps and the capacities of family, friends, and community members.
- Forming a shared vision of valued experiences and community roles which will call out and support interdependent relationships and offer relevant assistance.
- Implementing a strategy which aligns personal, family, community and service resources toward the vision.
- Solving problems to safeguard people from the negative effects of new actions.
- Solving problems to manage costs efficiently.
- Renewing and deepening commitment to values that give meaning to the vision.
- Identifying and communicating what works; expanding the influence of what is being learned.