

The need for a longer, slower, careful therapy.

*An extract from 'Why Love Matters' by Sue Gerhardt.**

'In a restaurant recently, I noticed a tall, good looking man with grey hair who was giving the waiters a hard time. He complained about the speed of the service and then he questioned whether they had brought the right drinks. Then he asked why they had not been offered Parmesan cheese. He was so agitated about getting his physical needs met that he did not seem to be aware of the emotional state of the other diners at his table, who were looking increasingly uncomfortable and embarrassed. The conversation, which had been animated when they sat down, petered out as the atmosphere became more and more tense. This little scene is in some ways typical of the mentality which is so focused on getting things done, getting things, achieving goals, that it loses track of relationships. This man was not taking others' feelings into account. He was not thinking how the waiter felt, nor the people with whom he was eating. His goal was to get the right meal at the right time. He lost touch with the pleasure of company, of conversation, of relaxing with other people. . .

The goal-orientated mentality is the same mentality which writes columns in newspapers deriding the need for self esteem, the same mentality which talks about 'wallowing' in feelings. It encompasses the 'stiff upper lip', the Protestant work ethic, the 'hurry sickness' aspects of our culture. Will-power and exertion are prized over responsiveness and a willingness to take time. Life is tough, they will say, just get on with it. In this way the splits between mind and body, thought and feeling, personal and public, are perpetuated. Listening to feelings, your own or someone else's, can slow you down. It can delay the achievement of goals.

Editor: **Psychoanalytic psychotherapy** is a slow careful process that takes time, which is one reason why some people are critical of it. Many of the prospective patients who approach A.P.E.L asking for help have tried quicker ways of getting help but have found that their real concerns about the quality of their lives were not addressed.

The 'goal orientated' way of living, described above has left them feeling empty, anxious, lonely or depressed. A 'goal orientated' treatment may leave them feeling a similar way. What they long for is for someone to take time to really listen and understand how they are feeling and why.

This process, in some ways, goes against the grain of modern society and patients may feel anxious about being criticized by friends, family, employers or even their doctor for making the decision to try this sort of therapy. Many people who do try it, however, and get really involved in the work, say it has changed their life.

They now feel able to have satisfying and enriching relationships and feel fulfilled in their life and work whilst finding their life to be more creative and productive.

One patient worked out that seeing her therapist once a week for a year was costing her the same as the depreciation cost of her small car. She went on to consider whether she could afford to not pay for her car and then to consider whether she could afford to not pay for her therapy. This particular patient later realized that although her therapy cost a lot, not just in terms of money but also time, energy and emotional commitment, her life was more satisfying. Her self confidence at work had increased and she had gained an important promotion. She had also not been physically ill for a year although previously she had often needed time off work and frequently visited her GP. On balance she felt she had 'come out on top!'

* 'Why Love Matters' by Sue Gerhardt

Pub Routledge 2004 page 215