

## **OHP 1**

### **14<sup>th</sup> Deafblind International World Conference**

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**Happiness is the key to success - but what is success?  
Health, wealth or wisdom?**

**Paul Hart – Sense Scotland**

During today's interactive presentation (that may require some audience participation), Paul will explore what is meant by happiness and success in today's world. He will use the humanitarian Albert Schweitzer as his main guide on this journey but he will first use some ideas from the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, to ask what is a quality life and what are its necessary elements? What are the essential elements that might make us happy? He will then go on to explore the power of connections that exist between people and how these shape our identities and reveal our authentic selves, drawing upon ideas from writers in the field of disability, developmental psychologists and in particular the philosopher Martin Buber. This will allow a conclusion that 'stepping into relation' with others helps reveal our true selves.

Paul will then highlight how a variety of activities, including art, music, outdoor education and drama can allow real connections between people to develop and in turn this allow people to develop strong identities. He will illustrate this section using one story of a congenitally deafblind man but will try to draw parallels with the lives that we all lead, and this will allow each of us to explore to what extent we prioritise Knut Johansen's Art of Being Together.

In reaching some conclusions, Paul will offer some definitions of what is meant by health, wealth and wisdom and it probably doesn't give too much away to reveal that wealth won't be counted by bank balances. Our journey will ultimately lead to an idea that all of us function best when we really 'step into relation' with others.

Well Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Let's start by taking our title apart in a bit of detail.

## **OHP 2**

**Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. (Albert Schweitzer)**

That's a quote from Albert Schweitzer and in part it has inspired my title for today and will be our starting point on an exploration of what I think is meant by happiness and success. However, some inspiration has also come from the Canadian Deafblind and Rubella Association (CDBRA). In September 2006, I attended their conference in Winnipeg and on their website after the conference, they said that no-one left unhealthy, unwealthy or unwise. Put another way, this means we all left healthy, wealthy and wise. And this got me thinking about what they meant by these terms.

So today is about a day sometime in the future when each of us look back on our lives, what will we count as success? Will it be that we were healthy (whatever that means), will it be that we were wealthy (whatever that means) or will it be that we had achieved some level of wisdom. Or do we need all 3 to be happy? These are the central questions throughout this presentation.

Or to put it another way, as William Green said at that same CDBRA conference: "How can we put life into years, and not just years into life?"

We will start with a closer look at happiness.

## **Quality of Life – what makes us happy?**

The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus demonstrated that to be happy there are clearly things that we need, some things we might want but are not absolutely necessary and finally some things that you definitely don't need.

### **OHP 3 - Natural and necessary – you need these to be happy**

- **Friendship** –
- **Freedom** – in the sense of independence and being able to make your own decisions, have control and choice;
- **Thought** – having the time and space to be able to consider your life and reflect on the areas that cause you anxiety, so that you can find resolutions.
- **Food, shelter and clothes**

### **OHP 4 - Natural but unnecessary**

- **Grand house**
- **Private baths** (Like a hotel with an en-suite bathroom)
- **Banquets** (Like the food we've eaten in Australia)
- **Servants**
- **Fish, meat** (Try telling that to your average Australian!)

### **OHP 5 - Neither natural nor necessary**

- **Fame**
- **Power**

I want to hover for a moment or two around friendship. As you will learn throughout this presentation, if we adopt a wide view of friendship, one that encompasses connection, belonging, feeling valued, making others feel valued, the fullest range of interactions that can take place between humans, indeed any close emotional contact between people (including family relationships), then to me it is quite simply the most fundamental aspect of our humanity.

C.S. Lewis once said:

## **OHP 6**

*“Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, art...it has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival”.*

Without a sense of connection to people and the world around us, we will not thrive or be happy.

**Let’s explore this idea of connection more.**

There is a wonderful Canadian writer, Judith Snow, who describes a beautiful image of human life ‘*as if it were a thread floating between and connecting bodies – giving each body the capacity to be a person*’. She suggests if you are alone then you are alive but not revealed or fulfilled, but if you come into relationship with even one person then new qualities will develop within you. Coming into

relationship with two people means even more of the real you is revealed and as an individual's relationships increase in number and diversity there are increased possibilities for that person *'to become themselves and draw forth new capacity in others'*.

## **OHP 7**

*'In other words one or two threads will offer little support but a gossamer network of even five or six threads has strength to sustain a rich life'*.

Think now about all of your relationships and how those various people all might connect. These connections hold you together and give you a sense of purpose and a sense of identity in the way that Judith Snow describes.

So we are all interconnected and we all of us rely on each other. I'm reminded of the words of two fathers of deafblind sons, Stan Munroe and Norman Brown, who I heard speak in Denmark a few years ago and both said something similar: That they developed as humans in new and different ways after the birth of their sons. Parts of their personalities, characteristics, who they were, were revealed by their children. So in reaching out for connections with everyone in our world, we must ask ourselves what capacities does this person help draw forth in me, and which authentic parts of me are they already revealing? And if there are people in our world who we struggle to

reach out to connect with, then we must ask what capacities and authentic parts of me are consequently being diminished?

## **Partnership – a medium not a variable**

I want to return to Judith Snow's sense of this two-way process of human interaction and consider it against the backdrop of those early moments of life when all of us learned something about what it is to be a human. Many of you will be familiar with videos of tiny babies, some only a few minutes old, who are able to imitate actions made by their carers – putting out their tongue, yawning, wiggling their hands or feet. I won't go into great detail here because this is not a lecture on communication but I do wish to consider one particular aspect of imitation related to my theme today of connection and partnership. Andy Meltzoff suggests that when babies interact with others through imitation, they are learning that the other person

### **OHP 8**

'is not an alien but a kindred spirit -not an 'It' but an embryonic 'Thou'  
(An old English word meaning 'you')(Meltzoff, 2002).

This is one of the outcomes of imitation – it allows the infant to see the adult as 'just like me'. But we can see this also in exchanges between congenitally deafblind adults and their communication partners. Imagine what it must feel like for a congenitally deafblind person, maybe after years of being neglected within social

interactions, to receive an imitative response from another person. In that moment they will experience themselves as an 'I'. But the real magic of imitation happens when the deafblind person is revealed as a 'Thou' for the communication partner, thus endowing the deafblind person with a humanity that is often rendered invisible. It serves the same purpose for the communication partner as it serves for a newborn infant: it shows the other to be just like me. Imitation weaves its spell as powerfully on the communication partner as it does on the deafblind person.

Meltzoff takes these terms 'I' and 'Thou' from the philosopher Martin Buber who sets out a brilliant vision of people 'stepping into relation' with one another, thus contributing to the full revelation of each as a unique person. He captures this type of relationship that could exist between people, with the word 'I-Thou' (**OHP 9**), suggesting it is a relationship of 'openness, directness, mutuality and presence'. (**OHP 10**)

This has profound implications for all human interactions, but especially professional boundaries, because it asks us to always treat the other person as an equal and in my professional experience that doesn't happen nearly as often as we think. Perhaps we can see a link to Norman Brown's idea of being a 'co-learner' (**OHP 11**), a term he used when thinking about teaching congenitally deafblind children. Does Norman mean I am supposed to be the learner as much as my pupil is, or to put it another way, is the pupil as much a teacher as I am? Is that what Norman is really telling me? Am I supposed to

develop a partnership, make a connection, am I supposed to be genuinely interested in the deafblind child in front of me. Get away, that's obviously not what he meant – connect on an equal basis? But those who knew Norman will know that's exactly what he meant and he meant it with all the passion and commitment that we admired him for.

### **What can help us then to 'step into relation' with other people?**

I wish to highlight some activities that can help us 'step into relation' with other people and in part I'll do that by telling you the story of one person, Brian, a congenitally deafblind man who lives in Scotland.

20 years ago when Brian was 17 he moved out of a long-stay learning disability hospital where he'd lived for a number of years. He'd also moved around various schools and his education had suffered considerably. By the time he moved out of the hospital he already had a number of connections in his life – most notably his fantastic mother and father who kept in regular contact with him, but there were also psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, support workers, social workers, and a range of people who lived in the same hospital ward as him and. And if we take his Mum and Dad out of the picture for a moment, what kinds of roles did Brian play and what kind of identity did these roles confirm? What sort of reputation did he have?

- People said he'd eat everything on the table - look away for a minute and your dinner will be gone.



- He liked to break windows and other glass objects.
- He was a long list of medication and an interesting case.
- He was over sexual and needed 'support' to reduce this and was given medication at the first sign of his burgeoning sexuality in his mid-teens.
- He needed a better life.
- He was full of potential...
- Although he had been excluded from schools because of the challenges he presented.

This is how people described Brian 20 years ago.

Let's watch Brian first going rock-climbing for the very first time about 10 years ago.

Video footage – Brian on the outdoor rock-face

This particular activity sparked Brian's interest and from then on he went along most weeks to the indoor climbing wall in Glasgow with a Sense Scotland staff member, Dr. Joe Gibson. Let's look at Brian about 5 years later, when he is climbing a difficult route on the wall.

Video footage – Brian on the difficult route

He has learned a great number of skills and he is utilising all of his residual senses to help him overcome the obstacles. His movements

are quite dance-like and in all respects he just looks like any other rock-climber. But what has rock-climbing done for Brian, apart from giving him a very real skill? It has also allowed him to meet new people, principally various climbing instructors. It has helped him to change his own identity. For example, on one occasion, there was a young teenage boy climbing on the same wall as Brian. However, he was struggling a bit and finding it difficult to find all the holds. Brian was above him and glanced occasionally towards him, each time with a slight grin and snigger. He knew he was a better climber than this other person. Once Brian had been going to the wall for some time, he began to realise that at break times the instructors all went to sit outside for a smoke break. After a while, Brian began to join them on the front steps – he was now one of the crowd and again this might give us some indication about how he saw himself. But in developing this new identity, it allowed other people to see him differently – he was now a rock-climber and all of us could see that. He wasn't any longer just deafblind, someone with Congenital Rubella Syndrome – he was a climber.

Let's look at another video image of Brian at the climbing wall but in this video we see him engaging in another activity that has become very important to him and as much as the rock-climbing has begun to identify for Brian and for others, who he really is.

Video footage – Brian drawing at the climbing wall.

Brian has developed artistic skills in a number of ways.

**OHP 12 – Visual arts** - Brian with Karen

**OHP 13 – Woodwork** - Brian with the drill

**OHP 14 – Sculpting** - Brian with wooden sculpture

20 years on then, what kind of roles does Brian now have in his life and how has this affected his identity – both how he sees himself and how others see him.

- He is an artist – he paints fabulous pictures and creates wood sculptures that have been exhibited at the Glasgow School of Art, in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Scotland’s most popular art gallery, the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts, the Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre and at a conference centre in Amsterdam.
- He has a lively sense of humour and you see this particularly with those people he is really fond of.
- He gets really committed to some people who support him and loves to spend time in the pub with a few of them.
- He is a musician and has performed in various venues around Scotland as part of a group called Shimmer.
- He is a rock climber.
- He is a mate of the rock-climbing instructors and sits out on the steps with them after a good climb.
- He is a brother and goes home to visit.

- He seems to like people he shares his house with because he likes to watch them on video.
- He is a son to be proud of. He won a prestigious art competition and was presented his prize by the Princess Royal – and Mum got to meet her too!

**OHP 15** - Brian with his Head sculpture– this is his winning sculpture.

His life has changed and is now so much more full of quality. But it's not just his life that has changed, but arguably it is the way other people think about him and the value, fun and commitment that he brings to other people and they in turn to him. He is seen in a different light and truth he might always have been that person. And for a long time, maybe only his parents recognised that – maybe it was only they who truly stepped into relation with him.

Here in Australia there is a professional in the field of intellectual disability, Jani Klotz, herself the sister of 3 siblings with intellectual difficulties and she gives us some additional guidance about really understanding how other people perceive the world, how to step into relation with them. She is thinking of people with intellectual disability but we could be thinking of anyone we meet on our journeys through life.

## **OHP 16**

*'I would argue that what people (with an intellectual disability) need more than anything else is to be accepted and respected as they are. The aim of all of us who engage with them should be to support who they are, to provide the supports so they can be who they are, and to interact with them in such a way that their ways of being are appreciated and nurtured rather than undermined and dismissed. What this requires is stretching our rules of engagement and intimacy'.*

And in really accepting who people are, we should strive to find out what their interests are, understand their ways of being in the world and whenever possible we should meet these interests through as wide a range of activities as possible.

**OHP 17** – Peter and Joe in the great outdoors.

**OHP 18** – David and Karen working with textiles.

**OHP 19** – Lewis painting.

**OHP 20** - A drama group.

For me, the Arts, music, drama, outdoor education, sport, everyday leisure activities all support the development of our humanity. It is difficult to be involved in a music session without feeling its emotional

impact. If you are on a rock-face with a deafblind person and one of you slips, then the emotional impact is real for both people. If you are involved in pulling together a theatre production, then you are all caught up with the excitement, the fear, the panic, the exhilaration and all these feelings are real and they allow 2 human minds to come together.

Being involved in activities that we really enjoy helps to develop our social networks and in turn they allow us to develop a sense of who we are. Think how challenging this could be in the context of inclusion, particularly in services in so-called developed countries. My nieces and nephews might have met their friends at school, but they sustain those friendships outwith of school, through texting, using the computer, meeting up for activities, or even just hanging around together on street corners. It is relatively easy to include people in schools and other similar settings, but how many services could get funding to help young people achieve real inclusion so that they can sustain their friendships outwith of schools and through those friendships, develop their identity and self-esteem? Could you get funding to go to nightclubs, to shop only for pleasure, to eat out with friends, to hang about on street corners, to go round to friends' houses? There are real parallels also in providing Communicator-Guide support to people with acquired deafblindness. It would be relatively easy to get support to do your weekly grocery shopping, and to go on trips to the bank, but would is it so easy to convince a funding authority to provide Communicator-Guide support to pop

round to visit your friends, to have a riotous night out in the pub or to host an evening party in your house.

## **OHP 21**

### **Happiness is the key to success - but what is success?**

#### **Health, wealth or wisdom?**

Ok, let's see how we are doing in our quest to understand the questions we posed at the outset about happiness, success, health, wealth and wisdom.

We have become increasingly interested in the last few years in this poster published by the UK Government. The poster aims to illustrate steps any of us can take to minimise or avoid mental illness, but its sentiments are very close to the ideas we are highlighting today in relation to activities.

### **OHP 22 – Mental Health Poster**

1) Talk about your feelings	6) Ask for help
2) Keep active	7) Take a break
3) Eat well	8) Do something you're good at
4) Drink Sensibly	9) Accept who you are
5) Keep in touch with friends and loved ones	10) Care for others

(How many of these have you managed this week in Perth?)

So we can adopt a wide view of health as something that encompasses the full range of ideas expressed in the poster. So health is not just the absence of illness, but it is having people in our lives that we can talk to, people to share food and drink with, people to ask for help, people to look after, people we can have a break with and people we can keep active with through a range of activities that we enjoy and are good at.

And if we combine these same ideas with Epicurus' statements about the necessity of friendships, freedom, thought, food, shelter and clothes, then we might reach some conclusions about wealth. A rich person is one who has food, shelter and clothes for sure, but thereafter it is someone who has value and purpose, someone with an ability to participate in activities that provide friendships, connections, intimacy and identity and someone whose life, although connected intimately to the lives of others, has a degree of autonomy and choice with sufficient time to reflect on our experiences.

### **What else do these activities give us?**

So although I've talked a lot about activities we can ask one question of them: What do we really get from them?

I want to read a short passage from a book by Dave Hingsburger, yet another Canadian writer. In the opening pages of this book, he explains that he had been very ill and as he lay there contemplating his final journey, he looked back over his life:



*'After the funeral was planned there wasn't much else to do so I thought about my life. I had realization after realization...Once I'd finished reviewing my personal life, I noticed something. I noticed that my to do wish list was very short.*

*But the to be list!! I really wanted to learn to be more loving, to be more forgiving, to be more tolerant of those whose views are different from mine. I wanted to be more giving of my personal time ..... I wanted to be more able to communicate love and affection to my friends and family. I wanted to learn how to be me, the me that I believe God made, the me without all the trimmings'.*

This comes from a book Hingsburger titles:

## **OHP 23**

**'do? be? do?'**

And for him 'to be and not to do' – that is the question.

## **OHP 24**

Do, be, do, be, do

Do, do, be, do, do

Do, be, do, be, do

Do, do, be, do, do

Etc etc...

When you work alongside anyone, have a Sinatra moment and ask yourself: 'Will this interaction allow this person to do, or to be?'

This reminds me of Knut Johansen's ideas about the 'Art of Being Together'. (**OHP 25**).

And I truly believe the Arts, the outdoors, the full range of activities we have thought about this morning, are well placed to develop a person's ability just 'to be', in the way that we saw with Brian where his music, rock-climbing and art allow him to be just Brian, no more, no less. And that's pretty much all that is asked of us in life – to really 'be' ourselves. Martin Buber tells the story of the Hasidic rabbi Susya saying shortly before his death: 'When I get to heaven, they will not ask me "Why were you not Moses" but "Why were you not Susya". Why did you not become only what you could become?'

OK let's now unfold the full quotation from Schweitzer.

## **OHP 26**

**"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful".**

Do you really love what you are doing? Or maybe to put it another way, do you really love who you are?

The only thing any of us really have to do in our life is simply 'be' – to be a human being and interact with fellow human beings. Or perhaps

instead of other 'human beings' we could read that as other 'humans being'. **(OHP 27)** How we choose to be - that is the key to our happiness and our success.

And for me that's where wisdom comes in - to know that life is about being yourself but knowing also that you are part of something bigger.

## **OHP 28**

*"Just as the wave cannot exist for itself, but is ever a part of the heaving surface of the ocean, so must I never live my life for itself, but always in the experience which is going on around me".*

*(Schweitzer)*

For me, this is what leads to real happiness – and I'm a long way short of it yet - a willingness to accept who you are and then to 'step into relation with others', in a way that really accepts them for the individual they are, allowing the full revelation of their unique creative gifts, allowing them 'to be'.

So where before we could have seen the tragedy of difference, whether this be deafblindness, or any disability, or a different sexuality, or a different religion, or a different colour of skin – because in seeing difference we have imagined those people to have lesser stories, not belonging to my group, not connected to me. Now instead we can see the miracle of difference, whether this be deafblindness, or any disability, or a different sexuality, or a different religion, or a

different colour of skin. Difference gives me the opportunity to listen to new stories, to belong to more groups, to make more connections and in doing so I become healthier, wealthier and wiser – because my full capacities as an individual inhabitant of this planet get fully revealed.

Before I disappear, I am reminded of more words of wisdom from Epicurus: ‘When you’re thinking of your next meal, don’t think about what you will eat but rather who you will eat it with’. Do the same for the next coffee break, or tonight’s Gala Dinner...

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

## **OHP 29**

**Thank You!**  
**Go end the isolation**

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