

THERAPY

A COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGISTS CASEBOOK

By

Col (Rtd) J M OWUOTH

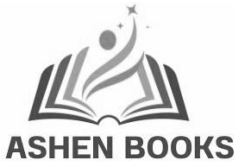
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ISBN NUMBER: 979-8319-051-19-6

Published by Ashenbooks



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Printed by Luminus publishers

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Disclaimer

The book is a true account of my three decades' experience as a counselling psychologist. I have however used literary licence as deemed appropriate. For confidentiality and to protect privacies, all the names and some locations and occupations are fictitious.

Preface

Therapy, also sometimes referred to as counselling, is a helping profession. Throughout history, there has been a deeply embedded conviction that under proper conditions, some people have the knack of helping others come to grips with their day-to-day challenges. In African societies, aunts and uncles provided this service within the immediate family, while diviners filled this role for the wider community.

In the modern scenarios, the emergence of the professional counsellor now attempts to fill this gap with the all-embracing feature of having an end state that is meant to orient the disturbed individual toward opportunities that can best guarantee fulfilment of his personal needs and aspirations. The counsellors, therefore, usually attempt to clarify the client's own thinking rather than to solve their (clients) problems.

The country has exceptional professional counsellors who have been useful in changing the lives of their clients, but their interactions have largely been mute remaining confined within the counselling walls and only shared, and only grudgingly, with the rest of the world through supervisions, training workshops and seminars.

It is hoped that this book, in some ways, will give a glimpse of what happens in the counselling rooms. It has been divided into three parts; The first part gives an overview of what defines modern

counselling and the common theories. It also includes my personal counselling philosophy. The second part is a summary of ten handpicked cases which I personally dealt with and are mainly recollections from my memory and short notes. It will be realized that I have banked on literary license and creativity to make the stories livelier.

The third part consists of two creative stories meant to act as a motivator and a summation for lessons garnered from the book. Apologies for the strong Catholic leanings in one of the case studies are hereby offered beforehand.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep appreciation for several individuals who have been instrumental in my counselling journey and whose interaction somewhat nudged me to bring this book to fruition.

I especially want to thank my family, Agnes, Tina, Juju and Alex. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Violet Nthigah (Ph.D.), Ms. Njeri Wamai, Ms. Veronica Irungu, Dr. Pamela Lunjalu (Ph.D.) Micah Lagat, Ms. Victoria Kameti, Ms. Jane Ngatia, Charles Kinyua, Ms Rose Mary Mwangi and Aaron Langat. Special Gratitude to James Githinji and Isako Jaldesa. (They know why).

Special regard is also due to Isahara publishing Ltd for graciously allowing the insertion of the two short motivation narratives of "*Seeking Harmony*" and "*Made of Sterner Stuff*" which appear as case studies in the book.

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Chapter 1



What is Counselling?

Counselling is a purposeful, private conversation arising from the intention of one person to reflect on and resolve an issue in living, and the willingness of another person to assist in that endeavour.

But then what makes for a competent counsellor?

I have listed 7 factors which I consider are necessary for one to be considered a competent counsellor in the Kenyan counselling scenario:

a. Spiritual maturity. We are a notoriously religious community in the country and naturally most of the populace, when faced with a personal dilemma, seek to find solace in the Bible and in the Church. It is only when everything seems to fail that they now seek or are advised to seek the services of a counsellor. It becomes therefore imperative that the modern Kenyan counsellor to know the Bible and the major storylines therein deeply. Their understanding of the Bible must be experiential to the counsellor and he too must strive to be well versed in the contents despite its diversity within the Christian communities.

b. Self-awareness/insight. As aptly pointed out by Carl Jung- Awareness is the heartbeat of therapy- But the awareness must not only be impressed on the counselee. The counsellor must also be

particularly insightful about his self. He must grasp deeply on how his "self" impacts on him in that particular manner and on his past and present relationships. The competent counsellor understands his strengths and weaknesses and is never defensive.

- c. Trusting relationships.** The competent counsellor must strive to avoid being standoffish and aloof. He should be able to build trusting relationships by being interested in individuals more so than in outcomes, able to walk in another's shoes, cross-cultural lines, and able to empower others more than tell others what to do.
- d. Flexibility in response styles.** The competent counsellor understands the need to use a variety of conversational responses depending on the needs of the client. This means sometimes questions are appropriate, other times silence. Other responses include reflections, summarizing, focusing, confronting, joining, problem-solving, self-disclosing. Counsellors who only use one or two of these styles will not be able to work well with clients who find those particular styles problematic. The competent counsellor must be intentional in her or his choices of responses.
- e. Assessment and Hypothesis skills.** The competent counsellor is able to move from their counselee's problems and descriptions

This counsellor is able to pull multiple pieces of data into a cohesive understanding of the situation. In doing so, he forms and tests possible hypotheses that clarify motivation for behaviour as well as point to

interventions. For example, is the child's behaviour merely rebellious, or is it Attention Deficit Disorder or merely anxiety based?

f. Observation skills. The competent counsellor not only understands people, their needs, solutions, and has the capacity to use multiple response styles, but also is observant regarding their own impact on the counselee. They observe subtle reactions from clients and seek to moderate their counselling style and/or gently explore the meaning of the reaction. Without these skills, the counsellor blithely works toward a goal without knowing if the counselee is really following.

g. Ability to care for self. The competent counsellor recognizes personal limits, boundaries and actively seeks to sustain a life of personal care. Far too many counsellors confuse sacrificial giving with bypassing appropriate care for one's own spiritual well-being. Just because one is spiritually mature one day does not mean such maturity is permanent. Neglecting personal care will probably diminish all other counsellor competencies over time.

Chapter 2



Common Counselling theories

The fundamental aspect of counselling and psychotherapy practice is that practitioners use theory to inform the way that they work with clients. The many ways in which 'theory' is understood in our culture can be explored by reflecting on the multiplicity of metaphors that can be applied to the process of using a theory. The most common theories are as follows:

The psychodynamic theory

The psychodynamic approach represents one of the major traditions within contemporary counselling and psychotherapy. The theory places great emphasis on the counsellor's ability to use what happens in the immediate, unfolding relationship between client and counsellor to explore the types of feeling and relationship dilemma that have caused difficulties for the client in his or her everyday life. The aim of psychodynamic counselling is to help clients to achieve insight and understanding around the reasons for their problems, and translate this insight into a mature capacity to cope with current and future difficulties. To enable this process to take place, the counsellor needs to be able to offer the client an environment that is sufficiently secure and consistent to permit safe expression of painful or shameful fantasies, impulses and memories. Although

psychodynamic counselling has its origins in the ideas of Sigmund Freud, current theory and practice have gone far beyond Freud's initial formulation. While Freud was convinced that repressed sexual wishes and memories lay at the root of the patient's problems, later generations of practitioners and theorists have developed a more social, relationship-oriented approach. Psychodynamic methods have been applied to understanding and treating a wide range of issues, and have been adapted to a variety of ways of working, including brief therapy, group therapy and marital/couples counselling.

The main distinctive features of the psychodynamic approach are:

- ✓ An assumption that the client's difficulties have their ultimate origins in childhood experiences.
- ✓ An assumption that the client may not be consciously aware of the true motives or impulses behind his or her actions.
- ✓ The use in counselling and therapy of interpretation of the transference relationship.

Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT)

The cognitive-behavioural therapy tradition represents an important approach to counselling, with its own distinctive methods and concepts. This approach has evolved out of behavioural psychology and has three key features: a problem solving, change-focused approach to working with clients; a respect for scientific values; and

close attention to the cognitive processes through which people monitor and control their behaviour.

The key therapeutic principles that underpin CBT have been defined the characteristics of therapy as:

- ✓ A collaborative project between client and counsellor.
- ✓ A work that is problem-focused and structured.
- ✓ Time-limited and brief.
- ✓ A Practice informed by research.

Unlike the psychodynamic and person-centred approaches to counselling, which place a great deal of emphasis on exploration and understanding, the cognitive behavioural approach is less concerned with insight and more oriented towards client action to produce change. The tendency in cognitive-behavioural work is to operate within a structured stage-by-stage programme in which the problem behaviour that has been troubling the client is identified and then modified in a systematic, step-by-step manner. The attraction of CBT for many clients is that it is experienced as purposeful and that it makes sense – it is made clear to the client what is expected from him or her, and how his or her efforts will lead to desired outcomes. The main areas of focus within cognitive-behavioural work are:

- ✓ *The therapeutic relationship*: Establishing rapport and creating a working alliance between counsellor and client; explaining the rationale for treatment.

- ✓ *Assessment*: Identifying and quantifying the frequency, intensity and appropriateness of problem behaviours and cognitions.
- ✓ *Case formulation*: Arriving at an agreed conceptualization of the origins and maintenance of current problems, and setting goals or targets for change that are specific and attainable.
- ✓ *Intervention*: Application of cognitive and behavioural techniques.
- ✓ *Monitoring*: Using an ongoing assessment of target behaviours to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- ✓ *Relapse prevention*: Attention to termination and planned follow-up to reinforce the generalization of gains.

The Person-Centred Approach

The person-centred approach begins and ends with experiencing. The phenomenological stance is important because the concept of experiencing is absolutely central to the person-centred approach – the person is viewed as responding to the world on the basis of his or her flow of moment-by-moment experiencing. The approach associated with one Carl Rogers, called at various times 'non-directive', 'client centred', 'person-centred' or 'Rogerian', has been one of the most widely used orientations to counselling and therapy over the past 50 years.

There are probably two basic therapeutic principles that define

membership of the person-centred nation. The first principle is that person-centred practitioners seek to create a relationship with clients that is characterized by a high degree of respect, equality, and authenticity. The client is regarded as the expert on his or her own life and problems, and it is within the context of a facilitative relationship that the person can come to identify and accept his or her own personal solutions to the challenges of life. The second key therapeutic principle is an assumption that it is particularly helpful to work with clients in ways that enable them to become more aware of their moment-by-moment or 'here-and-now' experiencing. The idea is that patterns of thought and feeling that are associated with difficulties in everyday life situations are being continually recreated, wherever the client might be, and that a willingness to enter the now provides the client and therapist with opportunities to learn about these patterns, and change them.

The image of the person in humanistic psychology is of a self-striving to find meaning and fulfilment in the world. Five 'basic postulates' for humanistic psychology have been formulated as follows:

- ✓ Human beings, as human, supersede the sum of their parts. They cannot be reduced to components.
- ✓ Human beings have their existence in a uniquely human context, as well as in a cosmic ecology.

- ✓ Human beings are aware and aware of being aware; that is, they are conscious. Human consciousness always includes an awareness of oneself in the context of other people.
- ✓ Human beings have some choice and, with that, responsibility.
- ✓ Human beings are intentional, aim at goals, are aware that they cause future events, and seek meaning, value and creativity.

Chapter 3



Basic Counselling skills

Counselling is a helping profession, and as a profession it has various acceptable skills which have over time been regarded as the best options in a given situation. The 24 skills are as enumerated:

- ✓ **Empathy-** This is an intellectual process that calls on the ability of the counsellor to correctly perceive the client's emotional state and point of view and to communicate the same understanding, that is, feel one another. It means the ability to be able to live at least temporarily in another's life, moving about in it, without being judgmental.
- ✓ **Genuineness-** This is the willingness to be real and not hide a professional façade, to be non-defensive and to be reasonably role free. It involves being honest with oneself and with clients as well as being spontaneous.
- ✓ **Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR):** This is the ability of the counsellor to accept the clients just as they are, without being judgemental or possessive. It communicates respect for the client, irrespective of how offensive the client's behaviour might be. It calls for accepting of their strengths and limitations, their positive and negative attitudes, their constructive and

destructive thoughts, their feelings and behaviour.

- ✓ **Attendance and Availability-** This is the ability of the counsellor to give quality presence by being physically, psychologically and emotionally available to the counselee. The counsellor's non- verbal behaviour will carry a powerful message. The effect of what the counsellor says will be diminished if the attendant behaviour is appropriate.
- ✓ **Active listening:** Listening involves attending to hearing the message that clients are sending both by what they say and what they do. It is an active process of paying individual attention to what the client is saying. This process involves listening that goes beyond hearing.
- ✓ **Reflection of feelings:** This is the ability of a counsellor to pick out the feelings and emotions expressed and communicating back. The counsellor identifies the client's core message and offers it back in his own words, subsequently giving the client space to say what is important to them and imposing a minimal direction on the exploration, reflecting feelings accurately depends on empathic understanding.
- ✓ **Paraphrasing:** This means the counsellor restating, in his own words, the client's core message. It mirrors the literal meaning of communication.
- ✓ **Minimal Prompts-** This is the art of encouraging clients to talk

about their issue situations. Minimal prompts are brief verbal or non-verbal expressions of interest designed to encourage the client to keep talking. Verbal prompts could include expressions like "*Yes, I see, eh, then? Sure, aha!*" Non-verbal prompts include nodding of the head, smiling questioning look and so on. The message conveyed by minimal prompts is *I am with you*.

- ✓ **Silence-** Silence is simply giving the client space. It goes hand in hand with active listening, where a client is given time to talk. Silence can be the most productive if handled correctly, as the client could be trying to understand the ideas or feelings that they have just expressed.
- ✓ **Advanced level empathy-** This is the ability of the counsellor to pick from the client deeper and subtle feelings going beyond the surface and communicating the same cautiously. It deals with both overlooked positive and negative sides of the client's experience and behaviours.
- ✓ **Self-Disclosure-** The ability of the counsellor to constructively share a personal issue at an appropriate time with the aim of helping the client move from where they are stuck during a session.
- ✓ **Immediacy-** This is the ability of counsellor to deal with feelings and experiences in the here and now and cautiously communicate to the client.

- ✓ **Concreteness-** It is the ability to of the counsellor to get the client to be specific in what they are saying, that is, the client is helped to specific in their objectives. The catch point is that the counsellor does be led to resort to theoretical abstractions but responds from the frame of lived experience, with one's feet firmly on the ground.
- ✓ **Observation-** The counsellor's ability to see and make appropriate interpretations of feelings and thoughts through verbal and non-verbal communication in order to understand the way the client experiences his world. The client's posture, facial expression and grooming are a dead give way.
- ✓ **Structuring-** This is the ability of the counsellor to let the clients know their role and the counsellor's role in the sessions and especially in the expectations of both parties, as spelt in the contract.
- ✓ **Confrontation-** This is the ability of the counsellor to challenge discrepancies in the client's verbal and non-verbal messages, hence inviting the client to examine their behaviour and its consequences. This skill focuses on the negative thought patterns as excuses and games clients play and aims at expanding the client's awareness on some areas. It must be used timely and with sensitivity.
- ✓ **Focusing-** This is a skill that enables the counsellor to direct client

conversational flow to the areas that the counsellor wants. Its major function, therefore, is to enable the counsellor to respond to specific areas of the interaction between the counsellor and the counselee.

- ✓ **Summarising-** The art of summarising is a process of tying together all that has been talked about during part or all of the counselling session. This can be done in the middle of the session or at the end of giving highlights of what has been worked upon.
- ✓ **Questioning-** This is the ability of the counsellor to get more information or seek clarification from the client using open- ended questions.

Chapter 4



My personal Counselling Philosophy

I have been a counselling psychologist for close to three decades; and it is incredible to see and experience the life-changing effects of being listened to, feeling understood, and helping a person to connect with himself. As a counsellor, my goal has been to provide a safe, calm and comfortable place for my clients to process what they're going through and be introspective throughout their healing journey.

From dealing with issues such as stress, self-esteem issues, trauma, life transitions, self-awareness, to depression, anxiety and suicidal feelings; I have found that the truly feeling seen is perhaps the most powerful key to transforming our lives. I use an Integrative Approach where I combine techniques from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Person-Centered Therapy as well as Holistic and Mindfulness-Based therapies in my work.

As much as I focus on mental health, I also help clients pay attention to other facets of their lives that are important for overall health. I have a keen interest in how our physical and spiritual health impacts our mental health and I share resources with clients to help them become all-rounded individuals, sometimes involving practitioners from other professions such as nutritionists, psychiatrists, and medical doctors.

I base my clinic on the premise shared by Albert Ellis, that:

"You have considerable power to construct self-helping thoughts, feelings and actions as well as to construct self-defeating behaviours. You have the ability, if you use it, to choose healthy instead of unhealthy thinking, feeling and acting."

With this philosophy in mind, I help my clients build self-agency and the skills necessary to build a strong foundation for choosing healthy feeling, thinking, and acting.

I believe that the quality of our lives is mostly determined by the quality of our relationships, and I endeavour to help my clients improve all the important relationships in their lives. In addition, I have found through my own experience and through my client's experiences it turns out to be the right thing for them. Oftentimes, I find that teaching clients better communication skills, relationship enhancement tools and resolving fears can help them build better bonds and stronger attachments to loved ones. Sometimes, clients need to learn to create and maintain better boundaries, clearer rules and more consistent messages to have more equitable and loving relationships. I do not have a *"one size fits all"* approach to counselling. Everyone is unique and has a unique situation.

My approach to counselling is an eclectic blend of family systems theory and cognitive behavioural theory. I believe we are interconnected to the special people in our lives, and that the greatest

personal growth can be achieved in our intimate relationships. How we handle our intimate relationships reveals our inner struggles and conflicts. By examining our relationships, we can find our strengths and weaknesses, improve what is lacking and work on removing the dysfunctional thoughts and actions. We don't have control over the events in our lives or our feelings. The only thing we can control are our actions (words and behaviours) and our thoughts.

I am also a firm believer in the positive influences of faith on mental health. With a big fraction of the country's population adherents of the Christian faith, I find that many individuals turn to their faith during stressful times, finding solace and support through spiritual practices. I, too, therefore occasionally can resort together with the client may appeal to the call of the faith to attempt to provide a framework for understanding life's challenges and hopefully help the individual adjust, cope or change his overall outlook on his situation.

And then there is technology, it is hard to keep up with the explosion of available online information and the modern client is also generally well informed and has access to this information. My constant personal online research and my possible sharing some information therefore becomes of paramount importance.

Chapter 5



Hivi! Hivi! The Case of the Narcistic Zealot.

He had walked into my office, having been referred to me by a fellow counsellor who thought it could be easy for me to relate to him, seeing that we were almost of equal age. The Client had called earlier and fixed an appointment. He had arrived ten minutes to the appointment time, which sends two special messages to any counsellor. One, it could be a case of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or some call it a case of anal retention. Secondly, it could be a case of a person who is emotionally hurting and is keen to share the load and get some relief, somewhat. Or maybe, I was overthinking, it could just be the case of someone who is keen on keeping time- a not so common Kenyan attribute.

As he walked in, I noticed that he was dressed to the sixes, with a well-knotted tie and well-polished shoes. His handshake was strong and he met my eyes directly, clearly a very confident man at the top of his profession, whatever it was, He looked fiftyish, but a good fiftyish with only a bit of grey hair visible in his well-coffered hair.

He confidently picked a chair and I realised why the young counsellor had referred to him to me. His personality dominated the room and I was sure he could have been intimidating to an

inexperienced counsellor. After sharing niceties, I introduced myself and my long history as a counsellor. The introduction bit is meant to break any barriers and to set up a base for discussion. Some clients have been known to walk out from the session feeling that the counsellor was falling short of their expectation.

His sitting was in a very relaxed attitude with the feet inter crossing at the ankles, an attitude of confidence. I noticed that his socks were black and pulled up. Does that tell you anything? He was not afraid to use his big voice as he opened up on his case.

Client process -The Presenting Issue

He was fifty-two, and working with an international body as an accountant (Accountants can be fixated!) I thought. And was born again and a strong believer in his evangelical church, where he practised as a church elder. He has been born again since his university days and strongly followed the tenets of his faith.

Twenty-five years ago, when he was newly employed, he had, he repeated got into an entanglement with a young lady – who was-horror! - an unbeliever. That single entanglement led to this lady getting pregnant. He was forced against his better judgement to have a "*come we stay*" arrangement as he could not bear considering abortion as that was suicide and he also hopes that God was using him maybe to win over this unbeliever. Ten years later, and two other offspring later, he gave up on this lady as she had refused to change

and to adapt to follow the true path of faith and to come to the loving arms of the saviour Jesus Christ. They reached into an amicable divorce arrangement and he supported the children until they had reached adulthood.

The client had now been divorced for eight years and for the last five years, he has been actively seeking a partner who might end up being a spouse. His argument was that he has been very active in the church occasions with the intention of a likelihood of meeting a potential spouse, but so far, he - as he put it yet - to meet a lady worthy to be his wife.

Counsellors Exploration

Counsellor: What are your expectations of me?

Client: If for five years, I have yet to meet a woman of my dreams, it came to my mind that probably there was something that I may not be doing right.

Counsellor: What do you exactly mean by a worthy wife?

Client: I am a self-made man, a believer; therefore, I want a woman, a genuine believer who can have a genuine conversation together, a meeting of minds to be sure.

Counsellor: So, for the last five years, you have yet to meet anybody meeting those standards

Client: Yes, they have all been "*Hivi-Hivi*" in looks, commitment to Christ or even in the brains department.

Counsellor: To paraphrase your words- the three things you look for in a woman are –commitment to Christ, looks, and brain power?

Client: Yes, and financially stable.

Counsellor: You expect her to support you financially?

Client: At my age, position and work ethic, I am a master's holder, so I expect someone who may at least match my standards. It could lead to a meeting of minds. Besides, my divorced wife was also not a graduate, which could partly explain why things went south. In my immediate family, all my siblings are university graduates and all married to spouses who have major academic achievements. We are a family of high achievers and I sort of let my family down by marrying a person with no degree credentials.

Counsellor: There are so many online dating websites and some apps are even right on your mobile phone. Have you considered that option?

Client: No self-respecting lady with the grace of God can allow herself to be paraded online in search of a husband.

Counsellor: You mention that by your choice of spouse, you were a letdown to the larger family. Expound on that?

Client: As I pointed out, I merely married this lady on account of her being in an expectant situation and I am a respectable man and did the only respectable thing in such a situation.

Counsellor: Did you seek counsel from your parents before

marrying her?

Client: I did, they advised me to follow my heart.

Counsellor: What were the feelings of your bride's parents?

Client: As expected, they were so happy for their daughter as they knew she had found gold in me.

Counsellor: Realising that the first baby was a mistake, how come you ended adding two more children?

Client: Life

Counsellor: Life?

Client: Some things you just can't explain

Counsellor: Could you describe your parents?

Client: I don't see how that has a bearing on the quest of a wife.

I insisted that the accurate description of one's parents and background inform current behaviour. He finally, albeit reluctantly, relented and described both his parents in very many endearing words and dwelt more on the description of his father than his mother. On pressing, he admitted that he had lost his father years earlier and he openly admitted that he had not properly mourned his father as he had been abroad during his illness and eventual demise.

Counsellor's Processing

Having listened actively to the client and helped him to explore his problem, the following issues came to the fore:

- ✓ Unknowingly, the client could be wrestling with a narcissist

personality. This is a mental disorder found more commonly in men in which a person has an inflated sense of self-importance (Referred to as grandiose). The cause involves a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Symptoms include an excessive need for admiration, disregard for others' feelings, an inability to handle any criticism and a sense of entitlement. They brag about their accomplishments and expect others to shower them with praise. They even treat their sex partners as devices for their own pleasure or to brace their own esteem.

- ✓ The Client comes out again as a religious zealot. It is a long and difficult to change people who are obsessed with matters of faith. The change must invariably come from within.
- ✓ Love of approbation- The client unconsciously wants a woman in his life who is perfect in every way. A plug and play woman who meets his set high standards. And who the community will see him through her?
- ✓ It is possible that this client frustrated a very good woman who bore him the three offspring. It most likely was a loveless marriage and a relief to both parties when it ended.

Counsellors Compass

I realized that Person-centred therapy is what he needed in order to move in a positive direction. Carl Rodgers believed that a truly therapeutic relationship between client and counsellor depended on

the existence of three important or core conditions, namely congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy. These conditions help the client to seek truth within himself, feel accepted and safe, and to feel understood, hence a conducive environment to explore his issues and find answers. That is what I offered my client. The client has also to be assisted to dig deep in himself to see his shortcomings and to adjust his sails and come to earth in his religious extremism. I arranged another session, but assigned him homework to honestly list the reasons that probably caused his marriage to fail, with a special emphasis on his personal shortcomings.

I also asked him to read the tragic mythological Greek history of Narcissi. I intend to have that as the opening gambit in our next session.

The death of his father also needs to be further explored as it could have a bearing on his view of women.

Chapter 6



Mungu Niite! The Case of Echoes from Somalia

My client was a referral from a military counsellor who had a feeling that it could have been easy to deal have a successful session with him considering that I was a civilian and he was out of the normally straight jacket military thinking and routines.

Willy- we shall call him that walked into my office in the late afternoon. He was the typical soldier, big bodied frame, dressed in not so clean blue tight-fitting jeans and a green tee shirt. On his feet he had the regulation well-polished and huge military boots. Well-polished, I noticed, but still military regulation, there was nothing wrong with him having those on his foot, but then...

The green tee shirt on his chest had a message I failed to easily fathom. It was a shirt with a sketch of the planet earth imprinted on it, with the 7 oceans very pronounced and a relatively small replica of the land mass. The tee shirt read:

"70 per cent of the earth is covered by water- the rest is the DZ"

I could not understand and mentally I thought of using the words to break the counselling ice.

Willy was sweaty and his breath and sweat had the tale tell signs of having been drinking alcohol.

Without my invitation, he sat down and drawled,

"My boss asked me to come and see you"

Out rightly, I knew this was a tough client, who was not keen to go through the rigmaroles of counselling and who had a negative attitude as regards civilians. I had to break this thinking and set the appropriate counselling session.

I meant this as an opening gambit, therefore I asked him what the writings on the Tee shirt denoted.

That sort of threw him off balance and for the next three minutes he explained in short crisp sentences about the meaning of the Tee shirt. It broke the ice and finally he thawed enough to agree to us drawing a contract and finally, we started the session. His ambivalent attitude against civilians somewhat assuaged.

Client process -The Presenting Issue

Willie has been a soldier for the last nine years with the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) and is a paratrooper. This is his story:

“I am a soldier in the Kenya Defence Forces and crossed over into Somalia to rout Alshabab insurgents in 2014 as part of the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). War is cruel and I experienced very many ghastly acts in the 14 months stretch that found me there.

Following the demobilization from Somalia, I and the rest of my mates had a long break of 60 days to cool off.

I settled in my Nakuru home just relaxing and thinking of the way forward. Barely a week into the break, my house in Nakuru started to feel like a cell, I became increasingly alone with my thoughts and feelings. Within the military setup, there had always been people and events to keep me occupied; now I was alone and there was nothing interesting to do.

Anger, guilt and shame mixed with boredom started creeping in and drinking of alcohol just began to make sense. It became my escape mechanism. I slowly found myself becoming more indulgent into drinking and increasingly becoming better at hydrating to minimize the effects thereafter.

As my drinking binges continued, my emotional defences lowered guilt and shame meta sized into anger. Anger at myself, anger at Somalia, anger at Al shabaab, anger at the military, anger at life, anger at God.

And then the nightmares began and persisted and the daily dose of alcohol seemed incapable of keeping them away from me. I stayed in bed late, waking up sometime well after mid-day, dressing in the previous day's clothes and sauntering to the wines and spirits shop to revive my ever-drooping spirits. I became violent with the patrons of every drinking joint. It got to my head when a civilian asked me a stupid question.

"Did you ever kill anybody in Somalia?"

What answer did he expect?

He got the answer he deserved; I brought my left hand up which perfectly connected at that angle between the ears and neck. He went down in slow motion and stayed down. His friends swarmed me, my hands worked like pistons against them, giving as much as they gave, but finally the numbers were in their favour and I found myself on the ground being worked on.

I later found myself in a ward, bruised and battered, a fractured left arm and having lost hearing in the left ear. My release from the hospital and back to the military was tied to my seeking psychological intervention and was directed to see a retired officer who was now a part-time psychiatric consultant for the KDF.”

Counsellors Exploration

Counsellor: "Why did you come to see me?"

Client: Well, since my war experience in Somalia, I don't feel that well, and my close friend and partner asked me to pay you a visit.

Counsellor: So, what do you expect from me? From our session together?

Client: My traumatic experiences in the Somali combat zone continue to plague me, I have amazingly powerful flashbacks and unstoppable thoughts; I can't bear any loud sound or light; I only feel comfortable alone in a darkened room away from everybody. I can't watch television; I find the programmes extremely violent.

Counsellor: You mentioned earlier that you had ghastly experiences with Somalia? Could you describe a particular one which continues to haunt you?

Client: (After a very long pause) It is a whole cocktail of emotions. I witnessed death at first hand, the death of colleagues and mass death of the Islamic combatants. I handled human remains, I experienced savagery, I lived in fear, prolonged fear, and I experienced the extremes of weather, and I questioned my faith.

Counsellor: You questioned your faith?

Client: I lost a friend from a Jihadist bullet. He had been shot in the stomach and he took a long time to die despite our first aid. The helicopter which had been summoned to lift him to hospital also took a long time to come. (Silence).

Counsellor: Long silence

Client: Finally, after a long stretch of time, my friend opened his eyes and simply says " Mungu niite!" and God obliged. I have yet to forgive God for that.

Counsellor: Was that your most ghastly experience in Somalia?

Client: No. there was the time I first killed a man. Initially, I found it satisfying.

Counsellor: How satisfying?

Client: You see, my training is geared to hold my nerve, to obey orders, to be part of a team and to kill. So, in this instance when this

Al shabaab attacked our position, I reacted as expected and I was happy that my training had defeated instinct, and I had successfully done my first kill... But later...

Counsellor: But later....?

Client: (After a very long pause) It hit me later on that I had taken a life.... (Pause)

Counsellor: But then, it was either him or you?

Client: Yes, but still... He was just a young boy, just like our last born ... the bullets had opened up his torso and one of his eyes was also gone. He had died open-mouthed...

Counsellor: So, what was your feeling when you looked at this body?

Client: (Silence- while looking down)

Counsellor: Willy?

Counsellors Perspective

My sessions with **Willy** lasted six weeks. It was agonizingly slow as his answers were drawn after long periods of pausing and silence and his desire to explain in depth the circumstances. In summary, his trauma was tied to the following:

- ✓ The tension of holding on, waiting for long hours for the enemy to attack or waiting to ambush the enemy. Most of the time the waiting is done at night, and many times for nothing. Willy is

nowadays fearful of the night and its sounds; he sleeps with the light permanently on.

- ✓ The fear of death and dying. Especially when in a vehicular convoy and expecting enemy action through an ambush or the vehicle being hit by an explosive. **Willy** cannot tolerate walking unperturbed in the streets as any sound like a vehicle honking suddenly stresses him.
- ✓ The fear of death and dying from mortar fire. The mortar weapon is one of the most feared weapon, as there is relatively little protection against it.
- ✓ The handling and burying of the remains of several Jihadists also haunts him. He mentions seeing their intestines oozing in death and to him the oozing smelt of a butchered bovine. The smell persists in his nose daily he cannot dare look at "*Matumbo*"
- ✓ The smell of death- He had witnessed the death of a colleague and he realised that blood has a smell which has lingered in his nose. He cannot look at fresh meat in a butchery. He is now a vegetarian.
- ✓ He questions his faith following the loss of a young colleague who in pain had called out –"*Mungu niite!*" and God had allowed him to die. God should not have done that, he thought.
- ✓ The killing of a teenage jihadist haunts him, as his death throes were so telling like that of his kid brother.

Trauma is part of life, and every person at one time or another is bound to experience it in one form or another. It is an emotional response to a terrible life event and could occur through an accident, a rape, or natural disaster. Trauma, therefore, comes as to an adverse life that one finds physically or emotionally threatening or harmful.

Research indicates that rape is probably the biggest traumatic incident one can encounter. It affects deeper than even a combat situation.

For the soldier, despite his training, trauma takes a very different tangent because war takes many shapes and sizes, and the field of battle can be found both within and without; sometimes the real fight starts after the battle. A soldier may think that once he is out of enemy direct action, then the war is over. But then more often than not, the soldier sometimes brings the war home through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (PTSD).

Post-traumatic stress disorder is biology. It is the body's involuntary physical reaction as a person relieved the intense fear of a life-threatening event and the scalding emotional responses that follow: terror and a debilitating sense of helplessness. PTSD manifests as malfunctions in the way emotion systems learn and remember, it is a natural reaction to unnatural events.

PTSD is many things, but one of the things like extended trauma feeling is the failure to live fully in the present. Survivors of trauma

become incapable of living in the now, as there are always the compulsive mental returns to the awful events.

PTSD affects the part of the brain responsible for separating the past from the present called the hippocampus which becomes dysfunctional and the brain perennially re-enters fight, flight or freeze mode every time it is reminded of the experience, even though there is no longer any danger present.

No treatment entirely can erase PTSD and it becomes only imperative that it is managed. The shame, horror, fear experienced in such an event comes to haunt a person for a lifetime with each time being just as traumatic and devastating as the first time. Indeed, it can be even worse than the first time, because relieving it makes a person live in a constant state of fear and dread that gets amplified across the years.

In the case of my client **Willy** and probably for very many veterans from the Somalia theatre, it follows them home out of the theatre. So when the tour of duty ends and on reporting back to the peacetime environment, the veteran finds himself back at home confused, lonely, and depressed. He misses his military band of brothers, worries about them and misses the high and excitement of combat once he is out of it. No peacetime activities fill the yearning in him and he sinks down into a deeper depression.

The combat veteran has seen witnessed death at first hand, maybe of

his friends and definitely of the enemy and sometimes of non-combatants. He has been in places and has seen things that few people have witnessed so no one fully understands him. He keeps it all inside because telling some civilian friend or relative who was never there will sort of be unwise, as he the civilian would never fully grasp the overall situation. The only ones who can understand are other combat veterans.

David Grossman on his famous work *"On Killing"* states that *everyone who experiences combat comes back with PTSD, the only question is to what extent their mind and psyche are damaged and how they cope with it.*

The KDF soldier in question PTSD experiences can be summarised as such:

- ✓ *Questioning of faith with a bias towards suicidal thoughts*, a feeling of numbness and accelerated end of time thoughts.
- ✓ *Replaying of the various traumatic incidents*. Constantly reliving them at the expense of other demanding life issues. A feeling of never-ending battles in the mind.
- ✓ *Nightmares and attendant insomnia*. Finding it hard to concentrate on anything, because the senses are swarming on everything around sights, sounds, touch, are all highly sensitized.
- ✓ *Emotional dis-regulation*. A feeling of being alienated, of

incapable of being understood, a social anxiety disorder. Avoiding eye contacts, in extreme cases, anthropobia.

- ✓ *Embracing Alcohol for escapism.* A very common copings mechanism.

There are a variety of treatment options under the cluster of discussion called the talk therapy. There are several effective treatments that include:

- **Cognitive-behavioural therapy.** This type of psychotherapy combines talking with the client with an intention of relieving the experience to remove it being eternally retained in the subconscious. The relieving of the traumatic event is meant to accept and change the thinking that keeps one stuck in the cycle of negativity. This type of therapy is often combined with exposure therapy.
- **Exposure therapy.** This is common in the more developed western societies where the appropriate computer simulations. A mental health professional utilizes virtual reality programming to allow the patient to re-enter the exact setting in which they experienced trauma. Relieving the flashbacks and nightmares eases the path to normality.
- **Medication.** Symptoms of PTSD can also be treated by a healthcare professional with medications like antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications.

Counsellors Compass

Willy is on medication and I shall combine this medication with the eclectic of talk therapy this would involve long conversations on:

- Psychoeducation regarding PTSD, thoughts, and emotions to make him become more aware of the relationship between his thoughts and emotions. It is also meant to identify and negate automatic thoughts that may be maintaining the PTSD symptoms.
- Cognitive therapy: This involves modifying the pessimistic evaluations and memories of trauma, with the goal of interrupting the disturbing behaviour and thought patterns that have been interfering in the person's daily life. I shall work with Willy to identify the relevant evaluations, memories, and triggers of the trauma that sustain his specific PTSD symptoms.

After appropriate assessment; **Willy** will gradually be exposed to the approach trauma-related memories, feelings, and situations. By facing what is being avoided like the butchery and streets, **Willy** will hopefully come to learn that the trauma-related memories and cues are not dangerous and do not need to be avoided.

- ✓ Groups have been found to be very effective in providing a safe space for people experiencing PTSD to find some closure. I shall make liaisons to have **Willy** find space in such a group.
- ✓ Agree and work on a programme to regulate his drinking.
- ✓ Put a break on mixing civilian attire with the military

uniform, including boots/shoes.

- ✓ PTSD affects the close family in some big way. It would be imperative that **Willy's** family have two sessions with me. The sessions will dwell on psych education.

Chapter 7



Mwanaa! The case of the Mama of two worlds

She had booked an appointment for a session by WhatsApp. She had inquired about my rates and while agreeable, she also indicated that she only needed about twenty minutes of my time. She appeared on the dot and at first glance, you could not doubt that she was an overachiever. She had a calm, friendly face she looked neat, pretty, feminine, disciplined but with an air of self-assurance that you could push her only to her set limits. Her dress said it all.

A finger rosary was in her middle finger, which from habit she constantly massaged almost unconsciously, an assurance of her strong statement to her Catholic faith. She had thick bifocals and at a glance I put her age at about seventy, a senior citizen now enjoying the fruits of her labour definitely from a top government position or a dollar paying corporate organisation.

Client Process the Presenting Issue

In a rich voice, she presented her case. **Beryl** was seventy, a retired university professor, she was Luhya from Western Kenya but had been married for the last forty years in the Central part of Kenya to a person of the Kikuyu ethnic community. A mother of two boys and two girls and a grandmother of five. She was the firstborn in her family of two with a younger brother, a lawyer who had passed on

six months to the day.

The lawyer brother- Let us call him **Caleb**- had also been married to a fellow lady lawyer who hailed from the Embu in the larger Mount Kenya region. They had been blessed with three daughters with the last born, now 20 and studying at a local international university. They had built a splendid, 5 bedroomed, four bath- roomed home in the Ngong area on the outskirts of Nairobi city.

Four years ago, **Caleb's** wife got an international opening as a legal aide in the Netherlands, she relocated with the two daughters to the European country. The 20-year-old youngest daughter moved into a university hostel. Where every school break she flew to visit the mother and the rest of the family in Europe

Caleb was lonely and what happened was bound to happen. Having been left alone as a geographical bachelor for about three years, **Caleb** got entangled with a lady Salonist whom we shall call **Stellah**. **Stellah** was about thirty, from western Kenya extraction, pretty and meaty in the right places. She also had a four-year-old daughter from an earlier relationship.

Caleb, though a leading lawyer, moved in with **Stellah** –definitely beneath his class- to a three-bed roomed house at a middle level estate in the eastlands quarters of Nairobi abandoning his lush residence at Ngong. Two years later, he died from a long illness, with **Stellah** nursing him all alone without any support from the first wifeor

the adult daughters. **Caleb** got buried at his farm in the western part of the country with all the attendant's traditional funeral rites. **Beryl**, the only sister and my client, was instrumental in the entire burial programme.

The first wife and the daughters flew in for the burial, alighting at Kisumu, and came home using a taxi and followed the burial ceremony from a distance and flying back abroad immediately the ceremony was over. After the appropriate mourning period, **Stellah** had moved back to the rented house in Nairobi to continue with her engagements of running the salon. A worker had been hired to look after the family farmhouse and **Caleb's** farm. (and grave)

Six months later, after Caleb's burial, the following had happened which has been distressing the client, hence her request to see me as a counsellor:

- ✓ It has proved impossible for **Stellah** to continue renting the house as her income falls far short in meeting the rent dues. Monthly she has always been coming to cajole the sister-in-law **Beryl** to supplement the payment for the house.
- ✓ The grounds man maintaining the upscale but empty house in Ngon'g has also periodically been making demands on **Beryl**, for his dues and the many financials necessary to run the house. **Beryl** has been managing these but at a big financial and mental stress.

- ✓ **Beryl's** several attempts to get in touch with the **Caleb's** first wife who is still abroad to take over the running of the Ngon'g house has been futile.
- ✓ The caretaker of the family home back in western Kenya has also, rightly, been demanding his salary every month, with **Beryl** always struggling to cover this expense.
- ✓ With apparent impunity, the twenty-acre farm inherited by **Caleb** from his father has been shared among the four immediate cousins and is now tilled with support of the extended family and the local chief. **Beryl** was not informed of these developments.
- ✓ The worker employed to keep and maintain **Caleb's** house at home has also moved in to live in the two rooms of the house. The worker's wife has made the homestead a local brewery centre selling the local brews of Chang'aa and Busaa with total disregard.
- ✓ **Beryl's** husband has distanced himself entirely from the estate of his deceased brother-in-law. **Beryl's** adult children have also shown no interest if anything discouraging their mother from getting overly involved in the affairs of her spinster home.

Counsellors' exploration

Counsellor: So, what exactly is the issue?

Client: What is stressing me, is not the incessant financial demands but the emotions attached to my brother and my very Christian home now a Chang'aa den and also the arrogance of my cousins and uncles taking over the farm.

Counsellor: Have you sought out legal advice on the same or pursued the cultural angles to seek a solution? Sort of community decision?

Client: Some issues are beyond the legal guardrails, because strictly speaking, Should I pursue the cultural and legal angles, I shall come up short.

Counsellor: Is it possible that you have refused to let go?

Client: It is not easy to just turn around and walk away

Counsellor: But what if you do walk away?

Client: I will be haunted by my parents and brother.

Counsellor: When is the mourning officially over in the Luhya mourning ceremonies?

Client: I suppose this would be what we call a 'second funeral' ceremony or laying of the cross. It then also involves the sharing of his clothes and paying of his debts and the wife is tacitly allowed to pursue her life, normally assuming that widow inheritance would

have taken place.

Counsellor: So the case of your brother Caleb...Has that taken place?

Client: No.

Counsellor: keeps quiet to allow the point to sink in.

The psychology of letting go is the study of how people cope with loss, pain, and negative emotions. Letting go can have significant psychological benefits, such as improving mental and physical health, resilience, and positivity. However, letting go is not easy and often involves going through different stages of grief, such as denial, anger, despair, bargaining and finally acceptance.

"Letting go" is not easy and will call upon a strong stimulus to nudge somebody in the direction of letting go. It would also be desirable to cultivate a very strong constitution to let go what one considers being a historical prized possession. Refusing to let go of certain beliefs or behaviours that are no longer contributing to our development restricts our ability to grow and gain wisdom.

As the case of **Beryl** refers, her failure to let go of there is now a cause of distress and constant anxiety.

I shall lead **Beryl** to seek a final closure over this by having the second burial over the case of his brother **Caleb**. This should straighten some underlying issues and give her space and closure and allow her to walk away, yes, one foot after another.

POSTSCRIPT

*Alls well that ends well; **Beryl** almost singlehandedly organised for the laying of the cross of the late brother and on completion, the elders of the clan in consonance with the local administration had a seating organised by her and the major decisions over the case were ironed out. Beryl agreed to let go some of the commitments handing them over to the extended family and somewhat achieving closure over the case. - somewhat.*

Chapter 8



Macho Pya! Pya! The case of Peter's roving eyes

Tessie had made an appointment by phone two days earlier and had walked into my clinic about ten minutes to the appointment time and whiled the minutes away. She was tall and gaunt and was on the wrong side of fifty and working hard and succeeding to keep creeping nature at bay. Tessie had taken time to dress and everything about her looked well and carefully arranged from the suede shoes, the stocking and the expensive russet coloured dress. A golden ring on the perfectly manicured finger completed the picture. Self- centred, I thought. Cool, unaffectionate.

She was a married lady aged 54, a mother of three adults, one boy and two daughters, all involved in some worthy pursuit; She ran a beauty shop at the upmarket Westlands suburbs and had been running it for the last ten years she resigned from her employment. Tessie was a grandmother of two with one grandchild aged eight living with her. The family was domiciled in the upmarket area of the city. The husband (**Peter**) was an assuming 65-year-old former top media executive who had retired early in the year and was whiling away his time writing his memoirs with occasional strolls around to the local shopping centre. Except for Friday evenings when he spent some time in the club and Saturday when he joined his

paunchy friend's full day for a game of golf and later socializing in the clubhouse.

On Sundays the family trooped for mass and later to a family lunch and occasional visiting of relatives. The normal routine for **Tessie** was to leave the house at 0930 hrs daily for her business endeavours and come back normally at about 8 pm.

Client Process-The Presenting Issue

Tessie presented the issue, bothering her. Three months to the day, she had glanced at the face book account of her husband on the laptop and noticed that the husband had been chatting with a personality of a lady trawling online named **Lola**. **Lola** claimed to be in her mid-thirties and worked as a lecturer at in a Nairobi University, she also claimed to have been widowed and was presently lonely and was making suggestions of taking a long holiday abroad to shake off the loss of the husband and her new status as widow. **Tessie** had been secretly following up the chats without the husband knowing and realized that it was getting serious as the lady and her husband chats had now taken a very sexist language with the lady **Lola** making incessant financial demands on her husband. **Tessie** was not exactly sure if her husband and the said **Lola** had met or if her husband had made any payments to the said lady, though her scrolling of the husband's phone had revealed nothing.

Tessie's concern too went on overdrive as the husband had offered

during the chats to clear **Lolas's** outstanding house mortgage, which she claimed amounted to Ksh 2 million.

Counsellors Exploration

Counsellor: Did you seek permission before scrolling your husband's phone?

Client: I am the wife

Counsellor: Does the husband have permission to scroll your phone?

Client: No. it is my phone.

Counsellor: In your married life, has there been a case of promiscuity from your husband?

Client: Never

Counsellor: Do you think you could be the reason your husband is getting involved with this **Lola** lady?

Client: No. Men are dogs.

Counsellor: How are the finances managed in the home?

Client: We have been blessed. I manage one rental house which I use for running the domestics of the house. The business is entirely mine and use the monies for myself entirely.

Counsellor: How would you describe your sexual relation

Client: It is no longer fulfilling since retirement and I suspect my husband is going through a case of semi-impotency;

Counsellor- Are you having an extramarital sexual encounter

Client: I am here not the subject of discussion.

Counsellor: Have you considered the possibility that maybe your actions-consciously or unconsciously could be the contributing factors to your husband's alleged quest for extra marital?

Client: I don't think so. If I have wronged him, he should just bare it open and we see how we can resolve the issue.

Counsellor: When did you last do this/ talking and resolving your differences?

Client: It has been some time.

Counsellor: What Are Your Family Dynamics Like? How are the relations with the larger extended family?

Counsellor: Is your spouse religious? Are you?

Client: We never miss church services on Sunday, but we are back benchers on church business. Peter though has been assisting financially in improving the church at home.

Counsellor: Has your spouse been interested in politics?

Client: Apart from what he gathers on TV and social media, he has shown no interest entirely in matters of politics

Counsellor: Have you, as a family, gone out for holidays since his retirement?

Client: I have been on holidays with the girls...But Mzee has never been keen on holidays.

Counsellor: How is your relations with your husband's extended

family?

Client: Tolerable

Counsellor: What exactly do you mean by that one-word answer?

Client: I try hard to tolerate my in-laws; they try hard too to tolerate me.

Counsellor: Do you think your husband has a *mpango wa kando*?

Client: No

Counsellor: Why do you seem so sure?

Client: He is my husband; I know him in and out.

Counsellor: Would it be possible for your husband to go for counselling?

Client: No. He doesn't believe in it.

Client: Do you think I should confront my husband with this discovery?

Counsellor: What do you expect to gain by confronting him with these facts?

Client: To make him know I am aware and embarrass him and stop him from these stupid escapades.

Counsellor: What reaction are you bound to get from him once you confront him?

Client: I expect him to deny it.

Counsellor: So, if he denies, what would be your follow-up action?

Client: If he denies it, I have the facts and therefore I am capable of

exposing and embarrassing him. I have so many witnesses, all my friends have noticed how his eyes are, *Pya! Pya!* Over the church ladies.

Counsellor: You discuss your husband with your friends over such issues?

Client: You obviously don't know women

Counsellor: You mentioned you are keen to embarrass him, if you embarrass him, how do you see him reacting to the embarrassment, considering his age, children, and standing in society? Will your relation ever come back to what it was?

(Client looks down and remains silent for a long stretch).

Counsellor: What made you snoop? Had you noticed some change in your husband?

Client: No

Counsellor: What are the implications of your husband marrying another woman? A co-wife to you?

Client: He will not. I shall not allow that.

Counsellor: Can you stop him from doing that?

Client: If it comes to that, then divorcing him will be my option.

Counsellor: Why?

Client: He will have broken the marriage vows and I cannot allow another woman in our shared life, considering what I have done for this marriage.

Counsellor: Have you considered the implications of divorce at both your ages?

Client: Bill Gates divorced at 70 years, Jeff Bezos too at his at mid-sixties, so was Canada's president

Counsellor: I was asking about you and Peter?

Client remains quiet.

Counsellor: Suppose you let the matter be, but make adjustments in your relationship and suggest other avenues of keeping him busy?

Counsellors Perspective

The client comes out a strong personality, super opinionated and has probably totally orally castrated his spouse.

Humanist Eric Erikson's 8 stages of psycho-social development will be dominant in my discourse with the client; Erikson's work has been described as an important cornerstone of understanding human growth. Stage seven is especially apt; Erikson wrote:

Generativity versus stagnation is the seventh stage of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. This stage takes place during middle adulthood (ages 40 to 68 years). During this stage, individuals focus more on building lives, primarily through careers, families, and contributions to society.

In generativity, individuals at that age need to feel that they are making valuable contributions too. In contrast, when individuals feel

they are not making a positive impact or are not involved in productive or creative tasks, they may experience stagnation leading to lack of personal growth and feelings of emptiness.

Peter fits the latter bill here, retired, unappreciated, probably losing the sex drive and (definitely appeal) and living with a feeling there is nothing to live for and bumping into any young woman who appreciates him brings a spark to his life with a belief that a young trophy wife would bring zest (vibe?) again late in his life.

With stagnation, as Erikson would argue, **Peter's** dalliance with **Lola** could be probably because of the following:

- ✓ **A need to feel appreciated-** **Peter** on retirement rightly feels underappreciated in his own home. Naturally, like in every man, there's a need for recognition and to feel valued. He therefore seeks that appreciation through this Facebook lady.
- ✓ **Desire for Validation:** Every king wants to know he still has his crown, that he's still got it. Often, it's not even about the other woman but about proving to themselves that they can attract someone. It's a dangerous game of ego, self-worth measured in attention and desire from the opposite sex.
- ✓ **Emotional Disconnect:** The reality is thirty years or so after marriage, Peter's adult offspring have moved on, but nature being what it is, they continue to maintain strong relationships with their mother and invariably, the man is given less love or

attention. A consequence of this is Peter is now seeking connection, and understanding elsewhere and Facebook connection is as close as it gets.

- ✓ There is also the illusion of a better option with dreams that the every billboard screams at men that there's an ideal out there, a perfect match away from home. This can be enticing, and in moments of weakness, it's convincing enough to make a man step out, searching for something that doesn't exist.
- ✓ Maybe, too, it's not about the new love at all. It might just be about escape, finding a doorway out of a life that feels like a prison cell. **Peter** might be using this newfound internet love as a convenient excuse to hit the eject button on his current home situation.
- ✓ As Erikson puts it, due to a feeling of stagnation, it might just be a question of Peter feeling an emptiness and dissatisfaction with himself rather than the partner.

Counsellors Compass

I will impress **Tessie** on the sacrosanctity of the mobile phone and laptop as the modern personal space and would not recommend her barging into the husband's space.

I shall endeavour to point out Eric Erikson's psych social stages to the client and template it to her situation. I would recommend that she in a way to assist Peter to be more responsive to society, probably in church,

in volunteering, in a relatively lower-status job, or even in politics.

I shall discuss Maslow's hierarchy of needs with the client and juxtaposition it with her situation with a rider that her spouse has probably reached the top of his pyramid and would require something extra for society. Travelling the world together may be a suggestion.

I would impress the client on the importance of emotional presence in relations and not merely physical presence. Her continued presence with the husband in the church activities at their *Ushago* home would be a big boost to their existing relationship.

In conclusion, my homework to the client was to do research on the negative implications of divorce, especially in the African setting.

*I had terminated the case with **Tessie** a few weeks earlier, until one morning a walk-in client strolled over into my clinic, and when the client presented his case, It dawned on me that the case was similar as that presented by his wife. I handled the case and finally terminated it. And always at the back of my mind was the question...Should I tell him that his wife was my client over the same issue, should I refer the case or should I keep mute? One strong lesson that came to the fore was that the presented issue by a client is always very subjective and that even with the keenest exploration no client ever allows you to fully enter his orbit.*

Chapter 9



Macho Pya! Pya! Peter's roving eyes (2) version!

A tall, bespectacled, well-built man with a firm handshake made his way to the clinic and introduced himself as a 65-year-old retired keen to have a talk with a male counsellor. His voice was deep and I suddenly, I realized that he was a former top government officer perennially on television and reputed to be a man of means and deemed very generous. I intentionally did not show signs of recognition.

Peter (as he called himself) was seeking psychological support as he felt overwhelmed with his domestic environment. He pointed out to having had a single session with a female counsellor, but still felt that he needed to see a male counsellor.

We had a conversation and drew a contract, which he agreed to without any signs of qualm. He, however, refused to divulge why he chose to come to my clinic or to mention the person who referred him to me.

Clients process- The Presenting Issue

Peter feels overwhelmed by his domestic situation with the wife constantly berating him that he has roving eyes. This constant nagging is distressing and wearing him down and seeks help on how

he can manoeuvre out of this situation.

Peter had retired nine months back and Post retirement was now compiling a memoir of his life while at home. A task he works on from at 9 am sharp up to midday Monday to Wednesday. In the afternoons, he takes a nap and occasionally and potters around in his kitchen garden. In the evenings, he watches television and is a big fan of the Netflix. On Friday evenings, he visits his club for a drink with other retirees, while on the weekend he plays golf. On Sundays, he accompanies the wife for church service, a task he says he is not exactly fond of.

Peter admits that he has no close social contacts and that since retirement, with so much time on his hands, he has been getting so close to the cyberspace that every time, he finds himself scrolling his mobile phone.

Peter has been separated from his first wife of 34 years who also lives in the city in a named an upscale estate where she runs an academy. They are on very good talking terms with the first wife and his two children, both adults and parents.

Peter now lives in another upscale estate with the second wife for the last 23 years. The second wife came to the marriage with two children after a divorce and have a teenage son with **Peter**.

and spends most of his time on the Internet.

Peter's second wife, we shall call her **Janet**-is 58 and runs a business

in the town and normally lives the house at about 11 O'clock and back in the house at 8 PM in the early evening. A granddaughter of 8 years and a live in-house maid are also in the house.

Four Months back, **Peter** befriended a lady whom he had stumbled on through the Facebook, the FB lady calls herself **Lola**, claims to be 34 and a university lecturer. **Lola** and **Peter** are constantly on social media chatting, though they are yet to meet physically.

Peters' wife, **Janet**, discovered this dalliance between Peter and Lola and hence the marital conflict.

To attempt to assuage the wife, **Peter** has bought another house in her name and has tried to show signs of remorse to no avail. The last verbal attack was after a church service where the wife caused a scene within the church premises and within the hearing of several of **Peters'** fellow men's friends claiming that **Peter's** Roving eyes were all over women in the church. Peter is yet to go to the church again.

The trigger factor that has led to the client visiting the counselling agency is the stumbling by his wife on a WhatsApp love message, her reaction by embarrassing him and her threat to seek a divorce from Peter.

Peter does not want to see a marriage and family therapist together with the wife. **Peter's** major fear is that the wife might divorce him.

Peter was in anguish as he was almost shedding tears as he attempted

to recount how the wife has failed to attempt to understand as she constantly harangues him with words. The client is entirely not at peace with himself.

Counsellors Exploration

Counsellor: how would you describe your relations with the first wife?

Client: As pointed out, we are talking terms and our earlier enmity has sort of thawed out.

Counsellor: What about your relations with your adult children?

Client: They send me birthday cards; the daughter perennially calls me some financial loan to tide her over. I happily meet her requests every time.

Counsellor: When did you last go for a holiday break?

Client: Immediately after retirement, I went for a three-week holiday abroad.

Counsellor: What are the relations between your two wives?

Client: Very strained, no talking, same with their children.

Counsellor: What are the implications if the wife divorces you?

Client: It will be mainly financials, and social embarrassment and lowered social standing.

Counsellor: Do you have a will and are your family aware of it?

Client: There is a will but with my lawyers and there has been no discussion with any of the persons mentioned in the will. It is

reasonable.

Counsellor: Have you had a one-on-one talk with your wife over this **Lola** issue?

Client: She has not given me any space to even open a discussion about this. She calls me Macho Pya! Pya!

Counsellor: What does she mean by this expression? **Client:** That my eyes are all over the women in the church **Counsellor:** And you think that is true?

Client: *Kwani yeye nilimpata wapi?*

Counsellor: How do you think the wife learnt of your relation with Lola?

Client: I suspect it must have been from my laptop or mobile phone.

Counsellor: As a couple, is it agreeable that you can check each other's phone or laptop without seeking permission, or do you share passwords?

Client: We don't hold a policy over this, some things you take for granted that she won't look at mine or I bother to check on hers.

Counsellor: How did she raise this **Lola** Issue? **Client:** It was dramatic and verbal explosion **Counsellor:** How did you react?

Client: I kept quiet, I just kept quiet. The noise has persisted.

Counsellor: Why the dalliance with **Lola**?

Client: As you put it, just a dalliance, it was because I was on the

social media. I have not even met her.

Counsellor: And if you meet her and develop feelings for her. What would follow?

Client: I will take things as they come. In any case, there are three others we frolic with in the cyberspace.

Counsellor: What is your closest relative?

Client: My elder brother at our rural home. I also have maintained a good relationship with my other siblings.

Counsellor: Have you considered couple counselling with the wife after the embarrassing issue?

Client: She had insisted we go to the pastor for counselling, which I refused. The pastor had also called me over my absence in the church for several Sundays. There is nothing new the pastor can tell me.

Counsellor: What do you expect from me?

Client: I suspect you will be having a more open view of the situation outside the narrowed Christian thinking of the pastor.

Counsellor: But what to expect from me as a counsellor?

Client: I expect you to give me options as regards my domestic.

Counsellors Perspective

Peter's case calls for talk therapy with a strong bias towards Erick Erickson's psychosocial stages and Maslow's ladder of needs as wrapped in this manner:

- ✓ An aging man in the latter stages of a mid-life crisis with deep emotional insecurities questioning his past decisions, personal accomplishments.
- ✓ An aging man bored with his life and seeking comfort the admiration and the thrill of a young blood.
- ✓ An aging man with an impaired self-esteem who needs a younger woman to boost his esteem and maybe ego.
- ✓ An aging man at the tail end of his career and now feeling being stagnated by life and still fixated on his old identity.
- ✓ An aging man in search of a new identity.
- ✓ A mature creative man hovering at the top of the pyramid not sure of new life ladders to climb.
- ✓ A mature man henpecked and tottering towards depression.
- ✓ A mature man with no self-care programme.
- ✓ A mature lonely man wrapped only in his thoughts with no visible support systems.
- ✓ A mature man who needs to develop a backbone and learn to be more assertive.

Assertiveness being described as a manner of teaching people how they are supposed to treat you. Whereas, being assertive can help you spell out your needs without damaging relationships; a lack of assertiveness, on the other hand, can impact on your mental health

and damage your relationships as you would always feel that you are being taken advantage of and your personal space and boundary are straddled on.

Counsellors Compass

Despite his big accomplishments in his life and apparent deep pockets, the client's difficulty to embrace a major life transition in his life attributed to retirement.

At the end of my programmed three weekly sessions, **Peter** would:

- ✓ Have seen the need to reinvent himself outside his earlier life and to seek other openings closer to his heart.
- ✓ Have seen the need to cultivate new social circles, this would include reaching out to his first wife and struggle to nurture and rebuild connections with the spouse and his first family not necessary to spite his second family but as path to create better meaningful connections and to create a more sense of purpose in his life.
- ✓ Learn to be more assertive in his all his networks, starting from his domestic front by learning not to give too much personal information and to avoid over explaining himself.
- ✓ Cultivate the art of self-care and learn the skills of "Me time"
- ✓ To research on his legal guard rails.
To gladly learn to follow the dictates of his heart and loins (within reasonable limits, of course)



Riswa!!!- The Case of the Cultic Wife

A psychiatric doctor who I refer my clinical cases to had called me to fix an appointment with **Paul**. **Paul** had walked in on a Monday morning, elderly, well-dressed and obviously a man of means. He, however, on this particular morning looked downcast and very troubled.

After sharing the normal necessities, we drew a contract and he opened up on his issue

This is a summary of his story:

I am **Paul**, people call me as **Baba Wato** and I am 69. My wife is 63. We have been married for the last forty years and have been blessed with 3 offspring, two girls and a boy who are now all adults and pursuing their own endeavours. We (together with my wife) run a laundry business in the Central Business District and have a home in the city estates. We also run a mixed farm an hour and a half from the city centre.

I am a retired civil servant, having diligently worked for the government for the last 35 years before retiring. While working I had scraped and saved as all civil servants and invested in a laundry business. Upon retirement, I had plunged all our energies together with the wife in the business. And true to say, I am not

complaining as I am not worried about my supper any day, though I am not exactly a very rich man but also am no pauper.

My wife has been a very supportive companion all through our married life, very spiritual and leading the family through the universal and mainstream Catholic church. I, admit, am not very religious but have been active in all other spheres of my parish and is respected as a pillar of the community both in the Nairobi estate and in my home area.

My situation in the home front has been peaceful, with the daily routine of my wife and I reporting to the laundry business at about 10 AM and knocking off at 7 pm. We have employed a staff of 6 in the business. Every other weekend, I am either at the farm or to my home county to check and supervise the several hustles.

That has been so until four years ago when my wife was won over by some select friends in her *chama* to join a particular church led by a self-declared *prophet*. Mama has completely changed since joining this sect of a church. Her manner of dress changed, and then she started getting involved in many safaris, going for prayer meetings every last Saturdays of the month, where they do Kesha coming back home on Sunday afternoons.

Matters are not helped by the fact that the *Keshas* are sometimes well outside Nairobi, where this bearded and self-declared prophet leads the mass prayer rallies. These travels are an expensive and tiring

undertaking for **Mama Wato** but she seems unperturbed about the effect it is causing to me and the business. On our domestic front, Mama has demanded that the television be dedicated only to the channel connected to the prophet, in essence, it has forced her to purchase a smaller television which she has placed in one of the bedrooms where every evening she spends hours on end listening to the repeated loud preaching from the prophet and biblical songs from their church choir.

I can't remember the last time we had supper together.

Every three o'clock in the night is an hour she calls the third hour and she wakes up, links up with her prayer group online and prays in a loud voice and makes uncoordinated guttural sounds in what she proclaims as talking in tongues. It is a daily tormenting experience and I find myself so much relieved being out of the Nairobi house and now love to spend more of my time alone in the farm than the house in Nairobi.

I have patiently tried talking to her to curtail her association with these newfound friends and church, but every time I find scathing rejoinders about my wasted and doomed life. You cannot reason with **Mama Wato** over this issue, she becomes a brick wall. I have raised these concerns with her side of the family, but nothing is done. My adult daughters too have tried to talk to her to see logic, but she does not budge an inch. So, the girls have been avoiding coming home for visits.

We have always had a joint bank account with my wife with existing arrangements that any of us can make withdrawals even without consulting the other party. Two weeks back, she made a very hefty withdrawal which, to date, she has refused to explain to me and I suspect the money was all donated to the prophet in furtherance of the progress of their so-called church.

I am sure my wife is in the early stages of madness. I have never believed in some cultures mentioning dark forces, satanic or some such nonsense, but today, I don't doubt it that my wife *amerogwa*.

How can you help me?

Counsellors Perspective

I heard the anguish in his voice made the appropriate commiserations to **Baba Wato** on the stress his life had taken and thereby I sought clarifications on the following:

Counsellor: You have only mentioned the daughter addressing the issue with their mum. What about the son?

Client: He is abroad working in Europe, though he too has tried to talk to the mother about this faith thing without any change.

Counsellor: How old is the last born and when did she leave home?

Client: She is thirty-one and left home when she got married five years ago. She works in the city.

Counsellor: talking of bewitching, The Catholic church has an office

called the Exorcist office. Have you tried that angle?

Client: I had approached our minister of the church and twice he came for mass, described as a special exorcist service. In both cases, my wife conveniently organized her absence. Another time I brought a church *chama* for prayers, Catholics call *Jumuiya* and she locked them out.

Counsellor: What is your routine on Friday and weekend evenings?

Client: Every other weekend, I am normally at the farm, sometimes alone, sometimes together with the mama. When am in the city, I take time with my friends in the local base for that occasional beer.

Counsellor: Whom do you live in the household?

Client: We live with the house help; she stays in the servant quarter.

Counsellor: What are your birth positions?

Client: I am a third born in a family of seven, she is the last born in a family of eight.

Counsellor: Are her parents alive? And have you consulted them over this matter?

Client: Several times, her parents and siblings have come home over and a long discussion on the same has taken place, but my wife has always been rigid, quoting long bible verses to support her actions.

Counsellor: Why had you opted to see a psychiatrist, and what was his advice?

Client: I was keen; I am still keen that she is put in a facility for some time as her actions seem entirely of a deranged person. However, the mental practitioner advised that we seek a counsellor's advice first.

Counsellor: Have you considered couple counselling?

Client: Several times, but she has adamantly resisted.

Counsellors: Apart from the Saturday *keshas* and travels and the obsession with the prophets preaching. Would you consider her other actions normal?

Client: Put it this way, Monday to Friday we leave home together same vehicle, sometimes she drives, she jovially works comfortably until 7 PM when we go back to the house and on reaching home she becomes a different person locking herself in her bedroom as I had described until the following morning

Counsellor: How is your sex life

Client: *Nyet. Jembe ziko stoo*

Counsellor: Do you suppose that you could be responsible for this state of affairs...maybe you have in some manner done something affecting her psychology? Maybe you have a mpango wa kando? Being not open to her financially?

Client: Nothing that I can think of

Counsellor: Does she have a favourite animal on the farm or a pet here in Nairobi?

Client: No

Counsellor: Who is her favourite relative?

Client: Her father

Counsellor: Who is her favourite child?

Client: Our son Eric Wato

Counsellor: Does your wife take alcohol? Could she be on drugs?

Client: No.

Client: Absolutely

Counsellor: What is her favourite meal

Client: Chapati and tea.

Counsellors Perspective

Outside the mainstream religions, breakaways are common and are sometimes described as sects, some sects maintain their presence as they have deep-rooted tenets and establish structures which outlive the founders.

Other sects generate into what can be referred to as "Cults". From the description, mama Wato has joined a cult. a cult is an organization that enslaves adherent's minds through orchestrated deception, social pressure, psychological abuse, and repetitive indoctrination centering around an unchallengeable religious ideology enforced in a totalitarian way.

Cults will often manipulate and exploit their members, leading to psychological, emotional, and financial harm. They can also be dangerous because they often have an authoritarian leader who uses coercive tactics to control members using mind control techniques to

keep them in the cult.

Research has shown that many people who join cults are angry, frustrated and confused people who are seeking meaning in their lives. They "think" they've found it in the charismatic personality of the cult leader.

Cults often attract people who are going through a personal crisis or a transitional phase in their lives, such as divorce, loneliness, bereavement, unemployment, adolescence or just dissatisfied with their lives. Such people tend to be more open, vulnerable and receptive to the cult's message and promises.

Globally, several doomsday cults come to mind. There was the "Peoples" Temple of Jim Jones in Guyana, David Koresh in Texas, the Aum Shinrikyo of Japan and much closer home of Catholic Catechist Joseph Kibwetere of Kinungi Uganda.

It will not be farfetched to attribute the recent Shakahola massacres of coastal Kenya to the religious cultic figure of one Paul Mackenzie.

In the case of my client, there could also be the syndrome dubbed the "empty nest syndrome". This is the complicated tangle of feelings parents experience when their children move out of the family home and begin their adult lives.

It is a major crossroad in the psychology of any parent, as a large part of one's identity often becomes defined by their role as a parent. It

opens up a very huge gap in the parents' life with no apparent way to fill it. A parent's life suddenly seems to lack purpose. A feeling of now being less in demand, less needed, less wanted lost, useless and redundant.

Counsellors compass

I shall opt for talking therapy influenced largely by the CBT and psych-dynamic counselling theories. These will be the basis of my direction:

- ✓ My client **Baba Wato** has enjoyed working those many years and easily transitioned into retirement and running a business.
- ✓ **Mama Wato** has been running the business almost alone until the retirement of **Baba Wato**, when he now assists fully in the business. It is possible that, to some measure, Mrs Wato could have been resentful of this.
- ✓ I shall, with examples, dwell on the lure of cults and why it is, this pull-on **Mama Wato**.
- ✓ I shall also dwell on the empty nest syndrome effect. It is possible that this empty nest situation could be responsible for **Mama Wato's** actions and her move to join the new religion is a search for a new identity or a way to deal with her unconscious inner wounds.
- ✓ **Baba wato** is the third born while the wife is the last born.

Position of birth in some sense has an effect on the personality.

- ✓ **Mama Wato** needs a "turning point" to make her relook on the association with the cult. I would recommend a long couple's holiday together or even a visit to their son Eric, who is overseas. It at least could change the dress sense of **Mama Wato**.
- ✓ Back from the long tour, I would impress on **Mama Wato** getting a pet heifer so that parenting mentality is sort of nurtured.
- ✓ During weekends and school holidays, let the grandchildren spend time in the "empty nest."
- ✓ Hope has never been the best strategy, but then sometimes, some situations force one to rely on hope. It should also be the prayer of Baba Wato that what Mama wato is going through is the effects of a delayed mid-life crisis, and that will fade with time.

Chapter 11



From *Majuu* with love

The client reached out to me through my e-mail. (He also sent me a fee way above my usual rates)

Dear Counsellor,

I am 32 years old, writing to you from a city in the USA where I have been living since I was 26 after winning a scholarship. I am now a permanent resident and employed by a corporate organization. I regularly visit my home country for six weeks during my breaks in December. As a Luhya, I'm proud of my heritage. In 2020, due to the travel bans caused by COVID-19, I overstayed at home, where I met an exceptional lady who was 21 and who was off university at the time due to the COVID scourge I fell deeply in love with her and, with my financial resources, took her to experience many wonderful places across the country (she is from *Murima*, I am not sure if this is relevant to say). Despite my parents' objections, I proposed to her and in February 2023, we were married in a small ceremony at the AG chambers. (small is beautiful, she had said), Many of her friends, though attended the wedding. Unfortunately, my family was not represented.

I rushed back to the USA, having also submitted an application to be granted a visa for her to join me in the USA as my spouse. We have remained in constant communication while we await the approval and issuance of the visa, which typically takes a year or more.

During my visit in January 2024, however, I was extremely disappointed with the state of our expensive rented quarters. It was poorly maintained, and she was living with two other friends whose mannerisms, language and dress code raised serious concerns to me. In a moment of frustration, I instructed my wife to ask them to leave, but she outrightly REFUSED. Her dismissive attitude was completely unacceptable, especially considering I pay rent for the high-end house.

Later, I learnt disturbing information suggesting that our home was being used for sexual orgies, and that my wife and her friends were involved in activities one would categorize as being "*ladies of the night*." I have no one to confide in about these issues, as my wife shows nothing but rudeness and inconsideration. Indeed, when I confronted her over allegations of her living with a man in the house, she did not deny and retorted back loudly that she had no regret whatsoever over the fling and literally blaming me for her loneliness and infidelity as I had not been keen on pushing for her visa to the USA.

It finally dawned on me that there was no future in the union. I

walked away from that Jezebel. I am now back in the USA, and I am seriously considering cancelling her visa application and filing for divorce. I need advice on how my possible next course of action.

Dear Sir,

I feel for you in your predicament. There are so many questions that can be raised over the case, but I shall endeavour to answer you in the context of the e-mail only.

What comes strongly from your mail is that you followed your loins, getting hitched to a woman you barely knew, and you may have been led up the garden path. You also come out as a generous introvert, inexperienced with some wily ways of the fairer sex and probably who loves deeply, too deeply. It is also very likely that you have been fully enmeshed in the Western culture, which strongly advocates for individualism and in some big way explains the crisis you are presently experiencing. You also come out as a snob with heavy blinkers.

But then you too stand accused for several reasons. One, you have inveighed yourself into a young lady's heart on the strength of your deep pockets, and a promised best life in the USA. Two, you failed to give marriage the sanctity and seriousness it deserves and thirdly, you let down your parents, friends, and society in rushing into a sham you dare call marriage. As the situation stands now, you are on the debit side as your options are limited.

But as a counsellor, I will strongly advocate that you focus on your healing and allow yourself to move on. I will **advise** – repeat- **advice** as follows:

- Seek legal opinion over your thoughts on the dissolution of your marriage. This is important, as the Western world weighs heavily and adversely against a man seeking a divorce. Your lawyer is likely to ask you to seek strong evidence to support your case.
- Come back home personally and have time with your wife to see if you think there is something salvageable in the union. No theatrics, just a quiet sit down and honest communication. Divorce at this juncture should not be mentioned.
- After this discussion, you should be able to discern from your heart where your truth lies and that truth will make you free, not necessarily happy, but free.
- Should you be convinced that the marriage deserves another chance, then please do it but go the traditional way and court your wife again? Take your wife home – yes to *ingo*- and spend some days there with her.
- Seek your mature cousins (Not the Nairobi-born, Subaru driving, shisha smoking, whisky guggling, tight fitted suits, M-shwari laden, child support paying group) and a young uncle and visit your wife's home and do all as pertains to their marriage

traditions.

- Research and cogitate on what "Ubuntu" means to your universe
- Learn to open up and be more assertive in your dealings.

There is hope for you, *Kijana* and if your wit is anything to go by then you have your heart in the right place. Please find two attachments to this email.

Good luck.

Attachments

13 reasons why women cheat in marriage

There's no single answer to why a wife will cheat, as every case is unique. But from research, women cheat for all kinds of reasons. You may take your pick from the under listed:

- **Emotional Disconnect:** If a woman feels like she's not being heard or valued at home, she might look elsewhere. Sometimes it's not about big fights or drama, it's just feeling invisible in your relationship.
- **Lack of intimacy:** When the spark fades (and it often does), some women miss that feeling of being desired. If it's not happening at home, they might find it somewhere else.
- **Revenge or resentment:** Sometimes it's not even about desire—it's about hurt. If trust has already been broken in

the relationship by the spouse, a "why not?" kind of mindset jets in.

- **Boredom or Midlife Crisis:** Life gets repetitive, and some women crave excitement or something new to remind themselves that they're still alive.
- **Emotional Connection Elsewhere:** Sometimes, it's not planned. A close friendship, a workmate, a fellow choir member, can blur into something more before you even realize it.
- **Respect** -If the husband fails to respect his wife, everything will come crumbling down like a house of cards. Neither there will be love nor any friendship left. Respect among partners is the most essential element in a marriage.
- **Romance & Sex-** Intimacy is important in marriage, very!
- **Love-** Love is always action. Not like bringing roses every day, or some fictitious stuff, but genuine action which proves your love for her.
- **Friendship** - Whenever there is a difference of opinion, both partners should bring their inner friends out and resolve issues. Friendship is about caring for each other, even if they don't love each other.
- **Trust.** When there are lies and broken promises, it adds up to a relationship being unreliable and untrustworthy. And then the nagging starts.

- **Safety.** With no firm ground under a woman's feet, and no sign of investment from the partner, with safety not assured, a feeling of infidelity slowly creeps in.
- **Money for sex.** Times are hard, some wives get into cheating with a deep-pocketed man with the intention of evading poverty.
- **Seeking physical pleasure-** There have been instances where some mature women get into entanglement just for the sheer physical pleasure of the body.

But none of these reasons are justifiable for that extra-marital fling.

Ten questions that must be asked during courting:

Marriage counsellors keep pointing out that courting in marriage should last a minimum of six months and during this period, the following concerns need to have been ironed out before the next step of engagement.

What Are Your Long-Term Life Goals? Understanding a potential marriage partner's vision for the future is crucial. Knowing this

helps ensure they are not heading in different directions Do their goals align? Are they both on the same page?

How Do You Handle Finances? Money can be a major source of conflict in marriage. Discussing spending habits, saving strategies, debt, and financial goals upfront will help the parties understand each other's approach to money and prevent surprises later.

What Are Your Expectations Around Children? Whether to have children, and how to raise them, are critical conversations, how many? What parenting styles, education? Discipline?

How Do You Deal with Conflict? Conflict is inevitable, but how it is handled can make or break a relationship. Understanding each other's conflict resolution styles can help to navigate disagreements more effectively and avoid unnecessary drama.

What Are Your Views on Religion and Spirituality? Religious beliefs and practices can deeply influence a marriage. It is important to discuss each other's beliefs, practices, and how to approach religion or spirituality as a couple and potentially with children.

What Are Your Family Dynamics Like? Family plays a big role in marriage. Understanding a partner's relationship with their family, their expectations for family involvement, and how the new couple will fit into the two families can help prepare for potential challenges.

How Important Is Sex and Intimacy? Sexual compatibility and expectations around intimacy are important aspects of a healthy marriage. Discussing this openly ensures that both of are comfortable and on the same page about their needs, desires, and boundaries.

Do you suffer from childhood trauma? (There is ongoing research that claims that trauma can be transmitted through genes!)

What is the state of the spouse's health? Personally, what ill health might be running in the family and extended family?

Chapter 12



Kabaa!!, Kabaa!! - The case of the lonely warder.

Cosmas (We shall call him that) is a silent, rather sullen man who is not a pleasant face. His face is long and crooked, deeply lined, and concave. He also has dark eyes, not giving out anything behind them; they resemble, I think, a large and tragic plastic doll. But the most striking thing about him is the feeling he emits from within, like that of suppressed fire, a man with whom any human intimacy seems unlikely and impossible.

Cosmas has served for forty-plus years in the prison department as a warder and was set to retire in a few months.

It was interesting that his peers had donated and paid for six sessions (*One of the peers was also a counsellor, hence this move*)

On arrival, dressed in a blue shirt, dark blue trousers, and black plastic shoes, he seemed ill at ease and was obviously shy and rather felt out of place in his ill-fitting clothes and possibly mesmerised by the office environment. He only fully opened up after the third session and his words then were few and direct.

*(It is important to point out that the interactions between the counsellor and this Client, **Cosmas**, was challenging and time-consuming, as he took so long to reply to a simple question and was despairingly slow while explaining himself)*

I am so alone. I am depressed and lonely and have no friends or significant other. What is wrong with me that makes me so lonely in life? He had asked in a strong voice while looking keenly at me.

Counsellors' exploration

Counsellor: Why do you mean by lonely?

Client: I can't stand being with people and even my peers and I suspect nobody wants to be with me, just like my wife who walked away after only three weeks of marriage.

Counsellor: Why did you use the word depressed?

Client: Is what some of my peers have nicknamed me.

Counsellor: Please describe how you perceive think it is

Client: I suspect it is this persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest to everything and just wanting to be alone

Counsellor: Does that apply to you?

Client- Yes

Counsellors: Describe your parents.

Client: I don't remember my father, but people say he was a very serious no-nonsense man; my mama though was the best parent one would ever wish

Client: None, I believe in God, I am very spiritual though not at all religious.

Counsellor: So, what do you do on your off days, on the weekends, for example?

Client: I stay indoors as interacting with people bores me stiff.

Counsellor: Has that been the trend, or you picked this habit much later in life?

Client: I was a loner since when young.

Counsellor: So why are you now concerned about your lone life?

Client: I don't know

Counsellor: Tell me about your family

Client: I was married for about 6 months, but we divorced

Counsellor: any major reason why you divorced?

Client: I had to let her go as she was headstrong.

Counsellor: What about your parents and siblings?

Client: My mother is at the family home and am the only one responsible for her. Our father is deceased. My two brothers and sister are also in gainful employment at different urban places, though we are not close. We last met 4 years ago.

Counsellor: What sporting discipline does you follow on TV

Counsellor: Do you take time to watch them at the stadium?

Client: Too far, too expensive

Counsellor: What is your favourite program on TV?

Client: Vioja mahakamani – sometimes it makes me smile

Counsellor: Whom would you describe as your best friend

Client: John, he is in Mandera

Counsellor: And a woman friend?

Client: There is a prostitute in Majengo I normally visit after every two or three months.

Counsellor: So, your sex machine is not letting you down?

Client: *Hiyo, boss, iko chonjo* (He surprised me by breaking out in a big guffaw)

Counsellor: Have you got a pet- a dog or cat, maybe?

Client: No.

Counsellor: Do you belong to any WhatsApp group?

Client: What is that?

Counsellor: What is your favourite radio station

Client: There is a station which discusses " *Mapatanisho*"

Counsellor: Why do you like it?

Client: It makes me laugh

Counsellor: What do you intend to do upon retirement? **Client:** I am

planning to set up a pig butchery **Counsellor:** Why particularly a pig butchery?

Client: It is an investment few people have ventured into.

Counsellor: So, are you keen to have a relationship with a partner?

Client: For sure, I don't know.

Counsellors Perspective

The client's concerns broadly are that he is lonely and depressed. And it is important to clearly define the two terms.

- ✓ Depression is having a chemical imbalance in the body and specifically the brain and this diagnosis can only be done by a clinician. Depression sucks the life out of the affected person, making him negative and lacking the ability to feel uplifted. A depressed person feels like he is surrounded by dark clouds pressing inwards. It makes one push away even the most loved ones. It also robs one of all happiness and takes away everything that makes life worth living. Broken and ill you still try to live.
- ✓ Depression is an ailment that corrodes the overall thinking and emotions and leaves a person eternally tired, too tired even for hope. Research shows that the incidence rate of depression is at 1.9 Million people (2023) which translates to 20-26% for women and 8-12% for men. People aged between 14 and 29 are more prone to suffer from depression in the country.
- ✓ Depression does play tricks on our minds, convincing us nothing is worth anything. The term depression has, however, been wrongly overused in the country and even a minor normal day-to-day disappointment is wrongly referred to as depression.

Loneliness, on the other hand is a conditional state; it is not the same as being alone. Different sources have defined loneliness as the

feeling one gets when their need for rewarding social contact and relationship is not fulfilled. To be sure, one can be surrounded by family or other social relations and still feel lonely because they don't feel understood or cared for by the surrounding people.

As Abraham Maslow is at pains to point out, the human person is a social animal and, naturally, we enjoy the feeling that comes from knowing that we are part of a certain community and pick our identities from here.

But then at one time or other, we are lonely, paradoxically, we can even be lonely in a crowd. So probably what should be of concern to **Cosmas** is not loneliness as it were his perceived feeling of chronic loneliness.

No one likes to be lonely. Even the most anti-social of us want to have a little time to talk to people who matter to us. Loneliness can lead to depression, a loss of motivation, and not being able to fulfil one's social needs. We can counter this feeling of chronic loneliness by adopting a programme of self-care.

what is self-care?

A new concept that is now in vogue is the concept of self-care. Self-care is a broad term for anything we do for ourselves solely to look after our bodies or minds. It means looking after our physical, emotional and social needs. Self-care has gained recent prominence due to the emergence of individualism, the modern fast life,

unending hustles and social media that have negated personal quality time.

Self-care can also be described as a "Feel good" factor. Some of the major ways to self-care include:

- **Looking Good and feeling nice**-At a person's level of comfort and affordability, one needs to try to look great. Socialization is an innate attribute of all humans and we cannot separate our outward appearance from others. Dressing nice for any occasion is what entails here.
- **Acts of Charity**- Giving back to the community shapes our conversation and thinking and way of life and then maybe, just
- **Hobbies**- It is important that one identify a hobby that makes one feel good and somewhat fulfilled. It needs to be a healthy and positive habit- not alcohol and definitely not gambling.
- **Me time**- This the time to focus on oneself and nothing else. No significant others, no work, no friends, no social media. Learning to love one's own company is an all-time worthy investment.
- **Prioritize Sleep**: Imperatively, there is a need to get the quantity and quality of sleep one needs, sleep is essential for maintaining optimum mental health.
- **Seeking Support**- If one is experiencing significant mental

health challenges, it's advisable to seek support from mental health professionals who can provide more personalized guidance and assistance.

- **Be spiritual-** Seek and maintain a personal relationship with God, strive to be at peace with a superior being whatever one conceives him to be, and the only way to maintain this relationship is by prayer and meditation. Prayer does not necessarily change the mind of God every time, but at least it changes the mind of the person who prays.

Yes, self-care has been shown to improve mental health. Engaging in regular self-care activities can help reduce stress, improve overall well-being, enhance resilience and improve overall mental health. It

The counsellor's compass

Patiently, to my client **Cosmas**, I shall address the following:

- ✓ The difference between depression and loneliness.
- ✓ The essence of Self-care and what he needs to do.
- ✓ We shall draw a homework with the following time-bound enablers:
 - The need to adopt a pet (Dog or cat) for company.
 - The need to develop a more friendly mien and relationship with the lady he calls- Prostitute- to look at her more as a friend than a sex object.
 - Encourage him to identify one faith-based religion and passively

attend at least one Sunday every month.

- To be keener on his personal hygiene.
- To reach out to his siblings and the surviving parent and attempt to re-cultivate a better familial relationship.
- To look out and attend workshops and seminars in preparation for getting into the farming occupation post- retirement.

Chapter 13



Factory settings -The case of the Colonels Elephant

Lumbasi (We shall call him that) had breezed into my office with all the gusts of a tailwind. He was a big, boisterous man with a firm handshake, and he dominated the very air with his presence. **Lumbasi** was 58, tall, strong and had the glib and presence of a confident Luhya senior military officer of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF).

He was dressed in smart casuals and had arrived exactly on time as per our appointed hour. It was our first one-on-one meeting, seeing that we had verbally communicated over the phone while setting the timings of the first session. So, after a few minutes of chit-chat, we signed the contract and in a confident voice, explained his issue.

The Clients Presented Issue

Colonel (As he Put It-Full Colonel) (Rtd) **Lumbasi** was now 58 and had within the week finally retired from the KDF after 36 years of distinguished service. Within his period in service, he had risen through four promotions from a cadet to the newly retired rank of Colonel, he had served in various international engagements as a peacekeeper in the Sierra Leone and as a United Nations observer in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (DRC)

At the personal level, he had been married 24 years back to a

wonderful lawyer and together had three offspring, with the eldest also having joined the military and the rest at university. He had a big residence at the outskirts of Nakuru town which covered (He said) almost a grid square (I wondered what that meant). He was also in the final stages of garnering a master's degree in security studies at a local university and played a game of golf (his golfing handicap was 25, but was working on improving it) and the occasional beer. He also was a hopeless fanatic of football supporting *Ulinzi* in the local league and –of course- Arsenal in the English Premier League.

What was troubling was that despite working hard in the military, he had expected to have moved one up in the military hierarchy and to have been promoted to Brigadier. To an ambitious military officer; the Brigadier's rank is a gigantic leap in the order of things, it means a catapulted salary, added responsibilities and only one step to be a general and a general as everybody knows is everything.

Col **Lumbasi** was bitter with the military that he was not promoted as he richly deserved and was now set to retire and to pursue other less patriotic callings. What was eating his goat (as he put it) At 58, he was too young to retire and also too old to start a new career. Yet, he added, other junior officers, nondescript at best, had been promoted over him and were now grinning wildly and widely as Brigadiers...

Vinyangarika! Viberiti! Wamevaa cheo changu! He had called out in

pain!

Counsellor: Are promotions automatic in the KDF?

Client: No, of course not, at this senior level, several parameters are taken into account by a promotion board consisting of top officers and chaired by the cabinet secretary—but seniority is the number one factor.

Counsellor: So, the decision say of your promotion would be a board decision?

Client: You can say so. I too, have been a member of the promotion boards of my subordinates.

Counsellor: Does merit count in the promotion boards?

Client: Indeed, it counts

Counsellor: What, then, specifically makes you bitter with the military?

Client: I may sound as if I am bitter about missing the promotion, but then what am bitter about is that junior officers have been promoted over me.

Counsellor: During your career, have you been promoted over some senior officers or your contemporaries...?

Client: Yes, it has always happened, but you see *mimi ni mtu wa kazi!*
(He pronounced *kazi* as *kasi*)

Counsellor: From your experience and age, I suppose you know that

there are issues which happen which you entirely don't have control, especially in corporate circles; some intangible parameters?

Client: I have been on several promotion boards and indeed sometimes I did recommend promotion on some other basis, not entirely based on the visible job output.

Counsellor: I am happy you realise that. By my count, I see you have done well for yourself, but also am sensing something deep bothering you. Can we share it?

The Veteran for the first time looked crestfallen and promised to divulge exactly the issue that was bothering him. He finally opened up.

I want to marry a second wife- He finally blurted out while looking down. *Pipi(sic) ya pili, Nyumba Ndogo* –He repeated.

Oh, my God- I thought. We eventually revert to factory settings after all.

I kept quiet. After a long silence, he continued.

"I can't complain about my achievements so far in life, but there is an elephant trumpeting within the Lumbasi household. I am yet to construct a family house back at home as tradition demands. Five years back the entire family was home with that intention and while there, my wife and mother had an altercation which was purely kisirani... My wife had stormed out of the homestead and has since

then refused to go back claiming that she would never step back into that compound again. This is putting me into a deep quandary. My several attempts to convince my spouse to consider this move has not been successful"

I kept quiet to let the silence talk; silence in many cases brings clarity and provocation. He continued;

"I have been frequently visiting the folks back at home at least every three months or so again against my wife's goodwill. I am now finally retired and I have time to spend more time at home and to follow up personally on farming my big farm and to be close too to my now-ailing parents. A younger, more understanding domestic wife, I think, will be in my opinion essential; After all, I come from a clan known to practice polygamy. I have two stepmothers, my grandfather had 8 wives..."

Oh boy! Oh boy! Oh boy! I thought...

The counsellor's process

All therapy is ultimately grief therapy, a discussion of loss, the pain of loss and the fears that accompany loss. All healing practices involve addressing grief, that sense of loss, loneliness, and the fears that accompany these losses. All Therapy is basically a transition. The Colonel is in a big crisis of managing transition or, as psychologists would call it, adjustment disorder.

I realised that it was not possible to address the Colonel's anxiety and

racing thoughts, in a single session as the firepower facing this old soldier was six-barrelled:

- ✓ The loss of a job due to retirement, walking out from a cushy comfort zone, assured good pay, society's unqualified respect and the camaraderie of brother and sister officers.
- ✓ The pain of transition from a sure job to the personally untrodden path of retirement.
- ✓ The challenge of exploring a new identity and purpose: Many people derive a sense of identity and purpose from their careers and want to cart them together with them post-formal employment.
- ✓ The challenge of adjusting or establishing a new routine away from the more controlled military environment.
- ✓ The challenges and tragedy of adjustment to reduced earnings and likely financial stress.

Whereas retirement is not an event but rather a much longer transition with many phases, it is particularly hard for the military veteran, as the military has a certain pull that follows a person beyond the short time served.

Like my client, if you have served for thirty years plus in the uniformed services, there is always the risk that you've become

institutionalized. You've practically forgotten to think independently because the disciplined service has a narrow and regulated way of doing things. You are used to getting orders to perform even the smallest tasks and your positive initiatives are completely submerged. Crudely put, you are suffering from "cerebral atrophy". Getting accepted in civilian circles also has its drawbacks, for one, the social and cultural differences are massive for a long-serving former military officer. Unconsciously, while in the military, there is a tendency to be very earnest and devoted to duty compared to the civilian counterpart.

It gets worse, unlike the civilian, the soldier normally demands quick-fit solutions. Instant coffee demands and a microwave mentality.

Even though the Colonel claims to have a good operations and strategic planner, He may not fully fit in a civilian undertaking as his military skills and the manner of execution do not translate well into the civilian sector.

Another obstacle likely to be faced by the Colonel is the adjustment to a different work culture in the civilian world. The military has its unique structure, hierarchy, and set of expectations, which can differ significantly from those in civilian workplaces. This new veteran may find it challenging to adapt to a more informal work environment or different management styles.

And then there were bound to be challenges on the domestic front. About a week back, my client had a personal driver, a personal aide called a Batman, a retinue of officers at his beck and call and a reputation to behold and now he finds himself almost a nobody. That can be a steep downhill curve for anybody and unnecessarily complicates the smooth transition to civilian life.

In the domestic environment, the spouse and the family have also been acclimatised as senior officers' family (I heard it being said that the officer's wife was normally treated as one rank higher than the officer!) they therefore need to be demilitarized too.

The call by the retired colonel to seek a second wife needs serious consideration. Getting a wife post-retirement means a return to morning sickness, diapers, colic and teething, sleepless nights, paediatrician and adolescence and school fees, and parents' day's stress and "we need to talk" scenarios. Not to forget an added and loving mother-in-law. The situation gets even more complicated, like in the case of my client whose spouse is a lawyer. The Colonel is obviously suffering from adjustment disorder. A common case in almost all newly retired.

To treat adjustment disorders calls on a range of strategies rooted in good old common sense, this would be a hybrid method of keenly identifying the stressor, strengthening the veteran's coping skills and defences and maximizing his support systems.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is superb for this self-made man as he is almost at the tip of Maslow's pyramid and would only need a more sense of personal awareness to identify and develop his growth needs since it is that drive for growth and integration rather than solely the satisfaction of biological drives or compulsive repetition in striving for wholeness, for integration and the realization of a full potential. If I can lead him to look inward and become more introverted in the remaining quarter of his life, then my sessions will be fulfilling.

But to achieve this peak experience or self-actualization, it would be necessary that the entire immediate family be his first support system. I sensed that the old soldier was ready to accept the transition into civilian life, but had failed to adequately prepare the immediate family for this adjustment. I would, therefore, conduct two sessions with the family.

Counsellors Compass

Maslow famously says, "What a man can be, he must be," highlighting our innate urge to become the best version of ourselves. I was sure that this adage did not apply to the Colonel who had set his eyes in getting hitched to another spouse. Erotica love never has space for a third person (especially if, like the Colonel's case, the spouse is a lawyer) and the message must get through to the Colonel in some subtle manner.

Sometimes it's not about the empty quest for a second wife, it could just be about escape, finding a doorway out of a life, a home that now feels like a prison cell. the old soldier might use love as a convenient excuse to hit the eject button on his current situation. but then it is probably about the self-emptiness rather than their partners.

I am incapable of doing this since marriage counselling is a perennially sensitive and difficult zone filled with psychological traps, surprises and complications with no easy solutions. I shall therefore refer the couple to a counsellor principally dedicated to couple counselling.

Chapter 14

Anguka nayo! The Case of the Suicidal Adolescent

They had stormed into my clinic, a highly strung middle-aged lady with a teenager of almost 15 in tow; You could not mistake that she was the daughter. It was almost comical if it did not look serious. The mother pushed the daughter into the office as her mouth dripped so many words and ordered the daughter to sit down.

Rolling her eyes, as only a female teenager can do, the daughter we shall call her **Jacky** plonked on the seat and maintained a serious look at the mother. Who breathing hard finally sat down next to the daughter. I kept quiet to allow the tension to subside and some order somewhat to be regained.

The Client Process – The Presented Issue

The mother explained in so many words the issue at hand.

She and her husband were a happily married couple, both bankers working in Nairobi city, middle-aged and having worked hard to build a family home in Kitengela, 50 kilometres from the city. They were blessed with three children, **Jacky** at 14 was the eldest and at form two at a boarding school. There was **Devo**, a twelve-year-old and **Ronny** all day scholars at a nearby academy.

And then there was **Naliaka**, the efficient and polite domestic

manager, also called as auntie in her presence or Mboch when being discussed during the women's *chamas*.

The usual programme during the school breaks was the parents would normally wake up at 0530 sharp, have a hurried breakfast prepared by **Naliaka** and zoom off to town at exactly 0620 hours to be in office at 0800 o'clock sharp. **Jacky** and the boys then would normally wake up at about 10 O'clock have a lazy breakfast and watch television while tinkering with their mobile phones and other electronic gadgetry. **Naliaka** would dutifully serve them lunch (Never Ugali or green vegetables!) and then the trio would saunter out in the gated community to play around with their playmates until early evening, take a warm shower and awaited their parents who would normally arrive back at about 8pm for a family dinner before retiring to bed at about 10 PM.

This had been the daily routine until COVID-19 struck in 2022 and schools were closed for a record nine months and **Jacky** the daughter was forced to remain indoors during this period. The parents continued with their daily toll.

Sixth months into the COVID scourge- one of **Naliaka's** parents succumbed to COVID in *Bungoma* and she had to leave the city for the burial rites.

The following day after **Naliaka** had left for home, Mama **Jacky** had leaving for work. When she and the husband came back home at their

normal timings, they found the house in a mess, with the used breakfast and lunch utensils unwashed and the table and the house in a total mess.

The parents came verbally hard on **Jacky** on the strength of the argument that she was the eldest and by her the gender was expected to be more responsible on the domestic front.

Apparently, the scolding by the parents had no effect because the following day, nothing had changed and the house remained a mess. On the third day, in order to attempt to make the youngsters at least see the error of their ways and to make them improve on the situation, the father disconnected the satellite television, the WI-FI and confiscated their electronic gadgets.

On the fourth day, **Jacky** disappeared from home, causing panic and consternation. She came back after three days and refused to divulge on her whereabouts. The mother slapped her from anger. On the same night, she attempted suicide by taking an overdose of painkiller drugs.

She was in hospital for 3 days and a decision was made she relocate to live with her aunt, her mother's sister who had always appeared close to her. Three days after returning home from her auntie's place, she again attempted suicide.

After several bouts of prayer sessions, a decision was made for her to have a session with a professional counsellor.

The Counsellors Process

Suicide, the willing taking of one's life, has been defined as a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Having suicidal thoughts generally reflects a narrow range of options considered available.

Here are ten (10) facts about suicide:

- ✓ It ranks as the eighth leading cause of death in the world.
- ✓ Suicidal behaviour is viewed as the primary problem rather than a symptom of a disorder.
- ✓ A common finding is that men are more likely to take their own lives compared to women; this is probably due to the fact that men are most likely to have a history of alcohol and drug use and are also less likely to have dependants in the home.
- ✓ Most suicides are associated with major depression or bipolar disorder.
- ✓ Stress is also implicated in many suicide cases. Suicide attempts also are likely to occur following highly stressful life events, such as the death of a spouse, close friend or relative and in cases of divorce or separation.
- ✓ People who tend to commit suicide tend to signal their intentions, often quite explicitly such as telling others about their suicidal thoughts. It could also involve the disposing off of their possessions, drafting a new will, sorting out their

affairs, purchase of poison, drugs, weapon rope, etc.

- ✓ Worldwide, every forty seconds somebody commits suicide with the 15-29-year age bracket leading.
- ✓ It has been described as a disease where the only cure is prevention.
- ✓ Research shows that with appropriate early intervention and support, suicide by young people can be prevented.

It has been suggested that many clients experience a reactivation of the suicidal drive after an unsuccessful attempt.

Jacky's case is leaning towards having a personality disorder which is characterised by a condition referred to personality disorders.

This is a disorder characterized by excessively rigid patterns of behaviour relating to others. Their rigidity people from adjusting to external demands thus, they ultimately become self-defeating. These disordered personality traits become evident by adolescence or early childhood and persist through much of adult life., Adolescents who have this disorder tend to be overly sensitive to criticism, whether real or imagined. They take offence at the smallest slight and are readily angered and hold grudges when they think they have been mistreated. They also tend to remain hyper vigilant as if they are always on lookout against others as cold, aloof, scheming, devious and humourless and have a greater than average risk of falling into

depression, anxiety and are prone to be suicidal.

The suggested phases of therapy are:

- ✓ **Acute:** Jacky's case can be treated as such as there is a strong possibility that she might be third time lucky.
 - I shall insist for a mental assessment from a clinician and a change of environment, preferably a facility to lessen the tension from her daily environment; the facility would also provide some form of isolation.
 - In this situation I shall impress too on talk therapy as our talking about what is important to her in the wake of her attempt may provide an opportunity to catch the real cause of the stressor even in seemingly disordered reflections.
 - Recent research indicates bio genetics plays a big part in suicidal tendencies and that suicide tendencies cross through the genes that it is inherited. A deep dip into the family would, therefore, be part of my checks.
- ✓ **Convalescent:** This phase begins at a considerable when they are deemed ready to return to their home environment.
 - I shall endeavour to have several counselling sessions together with the immediate family and friends and to restructure the overall attitudes of everyone closely related to **Jacky** in such a way to relieve much of the stress that triggers her to the action. This is maybe the ideal time for the family to make

important decisions about shifts in their lifestyle and other circumstances whose modification may help **Jacky**. Seeing the reactions and the language of **Jacky**'s mother will also be a very deep and maybe a call for Baba Jacky to be more assertive.

- Recovery: There is that brutal wisdom in the psychological axiom that persons who commit suicide will eventually do so no matter how society may try to prevent it. Here my role would provide the guard rails for Jacky as a speed dial remaining her sounding board when she feels overwhelmed.

Eric Erikson Psychosocial Stages

The work of adolescence, as Erick is at pains to point out is the consolidation of a growing person's identity that they must come to terms with the various aspects of their personalities and newly developed sense of themselves and a differing personality.

- ✓ Signs of internalizing aggression like anxiety, depression, or somatization. Anxiety is worrying about things that you have no control over (often and to a marked degree). Depression is when aggression is turned inward against the self and includes suicidal gestures, self-hatred, chronic feelings of sadness or worthlessness, and/or problems with sleep and appetite. (Often and to a marked degree). Somatization means experiencing negative emotions as stomach-ache before school, but it goes away if they're allowed to stay home. (Often and to a marked

degree).

- ✓ Signs of externalizing aggression like anger, conduct disorder, and hyperactivity. Anger includes yelling, swearing, bullying, hitting, etc. (often and to a marked degree). Conduct disorder is a pattern of blatant disregard for societal norms and the rights of other people. It includes lying, stealing, and cheating (often and to a marked degree). Hyperactivity includes constantly moving as though driven by a motor, and impulsivity like getting out of your chair without permission in school, calling out without raising your hand, or not being able to wait your turn (often and to a marked degree).
- ✓ A typical behaviour which might include staring off into space and being unresponsive to your name, babbling to yourself, having strange or illogical ideas, and hearing voices no one else can hear (often and to a marked degree).
- ✓ Withdrawal-moving away from others and avoiding all social contact. Going straight to their bedroom and only coming out to use the bathroom or for dinner. Not wanting to be with people anymore.
- ✓ A serious lack of adaptive skills like being able to communicate needs and desires clearly, basic social skills (please and thank you), being rejected by peers, and having difficulty making and keeping friends (often and to a marked

degree)

- ✓ Signs that the child is being abused or neglected, including extremely poor hygiene and health problems related to poor nutrition. Soiling, frequent absences from school, etc. (often and to a marked degree).
- ✓ Signs of addiction- withdrawal. Sudden changes in personality or cognition (slurring speech, dis-coordination, etc.) increase in sneaking and lying, hiding things, leaving the house at strange hours with no warning, sudden changes of academic engagement in school, mood swings and emotional instability. (Often and to a marked degree).
- ✓ There is a huge communication gap between teenagers and their parents nowadays. Teenagers aren't completely honest with their parents or don't talk and share their feelings with their parents. Here lies the issue.
- ✓ Teenagers often act like they are fine when they aren't. They try to fight their battle alone until they can't. Often, we miss the signs that they had been giving all the time. They smile and laugh and we are unaware of their intentions because they don't want us to let us know they are struggling.
- ✓ Sometimes signs are obvious, but most of the time, a depressed teenager often tries to fight his battle alone. No one who is depressed wants to die; their anxiety and pain make them so

obliged that they see suicide as the only way to end their pain.

- ✓ Sometimes all they need is someone with whom they can talk and share their feelings, someone who understands them, someone who truly listens.

Counsellors Compass

My case with **Jacky** was taken on a first aid case, as the case was sensitive. With the situation now almost under control, I intend to do the following:

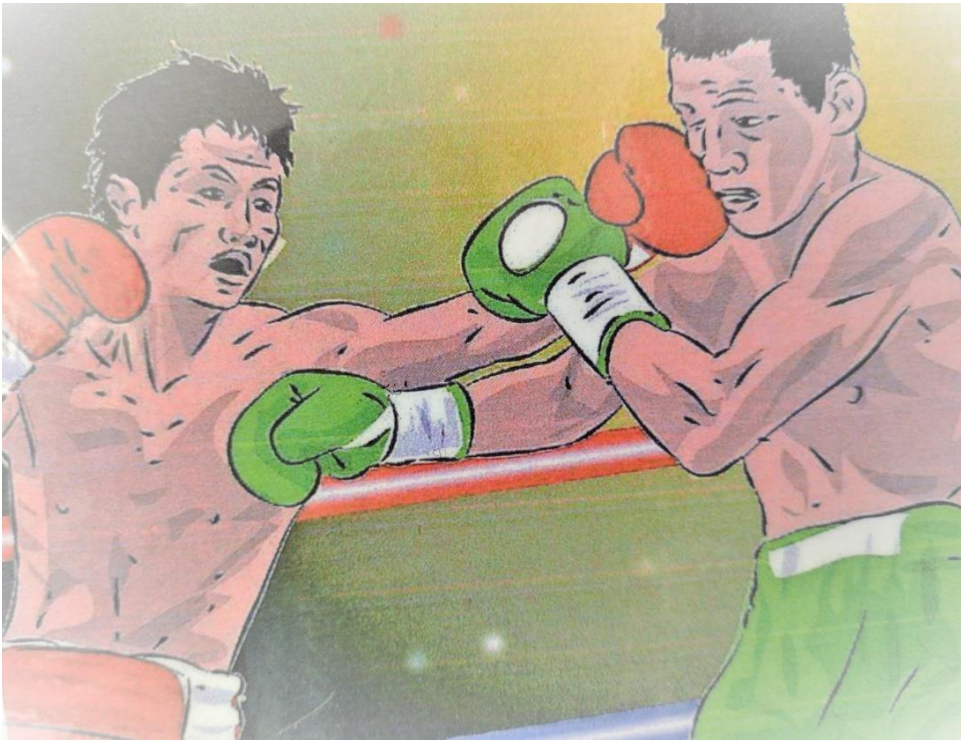
- ✓ Refer the client to a therapist at home with dealing with the adolescent client, preferably a woman counsellor.
- ✓ I shall also insist that **Jacky** has a session with a clinical psychologist to rule out possible chemical imbalances leading to her suicidal tendencies.
- ✓ Suicide and/or attempted suicides have a big psychological effect on the immediate family. I shall ensure that the family has a group session to get a better understanding of their communal psychology. I also think individualised counselling specifically for the mother would be called for.
- ✓ The family does not seem to have a strong attachment to their spirituality. I shall therefore appeal to the family to adopt more closeness to the appeal to faith.

Chapter 15

CASE STUDY I

MADE OF STERNER STUFF!

"Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:"-Shakespeare



The human in us, craves solitude from time to time, some respite from the usual hustle and bustle of our daily lives. It is 15 minutes

after midnight of the first day of January 2005, and I have been forced by circumstances to seek solitude 100 metres from the banks of the mighty river Congo in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

It is a cold night, the mosquitoes are buzzing, the stars seem bright, and the moon silvery in the sky casting a reflection on the meandering brown river. To my east at a distance of about 200 metres, I see the river landing site that serves the entrance to the hamlet of *Pweto*, a village community of about 20,000 which has been my home for the last 4 months or so.

I am a lone soul, deep in thought.

From my vantage position, the river stretches across to a width of about 1 kilometre as it flows in a southerly direction for another two thousand kilometres before vomiting into the Atlantic Ocean.

But then, if you are very keen and you are lonely, very lonely, you may hear the river talking. Not loudly, not shouting, but in seducing murmurs, almost. I suddenly sit up as I hear a sound, some murmurings, and I realise that the river is talking to me in the local language, a *Lingala* dialect:

"Mbote baninga na ngai mosika kombo mibale?"

This roughly translates to:

"Lonely soul yonder, what's up?"

Befuddled, I find myself without thinking, answering back.

"I am having second thoughts about my life"

"What do you mean?" The questioning voice asks again. *"I am not sure if I am made of sterner stuff. If I have grit"* *"Are you?"*

"I don't know, listen to my story and give me your unqualified judgement"

"Am all ears, watery, but still all ears"

Nakuru is the cradle of amateur boxing in Kenya thanks to the boxing club house set up by the colonials in the late fifties. Naturally, this has created a big interest in the sweet science of boxing. And since independence, two or more pugilists from the city have always represented the country in the various international meets. The first African pugilist to win an Olympic medal in the sport hailed from the city.

Traditionally, August, being a school holiday season, was the month when the coaches identified potential boxers and started breaking them in as pugilists. The only dilemma though for the coaches was that they had a very big number of youths to pick from while they only needed thirty or so young boxers annually. It was not a dilemma, as the selection solution was easy, too easy.

On that memorable August, I together with about 200 other interested youth found us at the Nakuru Amateur Boxing Association

(NABA) keen to be selected and inducted as pugilists.

My gloves were laced in and I climbed into the ring and walked over to the blue corner. My opponent was already in the ring, confidently leaning on the ropes on the red corner and rolling his neck as only boxers can do; He seemed relatively heavily built, fit, menacing and by his build and claddings looked like a boxer who knows his way inside the squared ring.

Our fight was scheduled for a single round of three minutes. I did not know it then, but this experienced boxer had been given direction by the coaches in so many plain words:

"Pummel him until he gives up, batter him properly".

Tink Tonk! The bell had sounded loud, and the boxer had rushed at me fast, expertly taking away my spacing and throwing hard shots after hard shots, His jabs were fast, flicking like lightning and pounding my body incessantly. I tried throwing a punch, but he expertly ducked under the punch and seeing that I was open, delivered a string of well-coordinated piston-like punches to my torso and the solar plexus.

By the middle of the round, the torrent of punches had slowed me; I was also bleeding from a cut in the eyebrow and was completely winded. Mercifully, a blow landed right in my heart. Blows on the heart can drive the wind and will out of a man. The canvas timely rose to meet me. I found myself out of the ring; I can't recall how.

All the young potential boxers met with almost the same fate. In the evening, the first day of selection had ended successfully and the head coach ignored our winces, asking us to report the following day for a second day of selection.

The following day, out of the original 200 who had willingly appeared on the first day, only fifty or so of us reported back. I had woken up with a puffy eye, a cut on the upper lip and my body seemed as if it had been broken and joined back wrong. Despite my better judgement and managing to evade the watchful eyes of my mother, I struggled and trekked back to NABA for another run of the selection process.

The exercise, just like one day one, was again repeated though this time I managed to land two nice shots to the more experienced and fresher opponent.

On the third day, only 15 of us remained and the coach expressed his satisfaction that we had shown heart to be boxers and was taking us under his wing as his new novices. We were made of sterner stuff. He had declared that we had grit, he had added.

The coaching staff now embraced us in the training to be boxers, we were coached for hours on end about the stance in the boxing ring, ring craft, how to throw a jab, a swing and an uppercut. They hammered on to us how to weave and duck and bob and how to clinch, how to dance and how to regulate the breathing during the

fight. The teaching of boxing, just like all practical subjects, was all in the ring.

They also taught us how to have timing; the right action at the right time.

Timing is the talent of the military general, the talent of the politician, the talent of the diplomat; it is the talent of the lover. It is also the talent of the natural pugilist. Timing is everything in life;

In two years, I had become an accomplished boxer, I had fought many fights, I had won many and lost not a few.

In August 1987, I was 21 and the Africa games came calling, I had the best wish any sports person would hope for, I had donned a sporting vest for the nation and won a gold medal in the middleweight category and as I received my medal, the national anthem in all its splendour played in my honour. My stomach bobbed around trying to control my patriotic wailing, I blinked back so many tears.

I was voted the best boxer of the tournament. And I still cherish the newspaper cuttings of the following day. One newspaper reporter described me:

"... A star is born; he impressed everybody in the hall as he pounded the opponent to submission. He is built like a middleweight, moves like a welterweight and punches like a heavyweight"

Explaining my excessive pace in the ring, my build and punching power.

Another writer described me as: *"sure-footed, fast, moves his head from the waist, the killer left punch comes from the shin bone"*.

"I see," says the murmur from the river "What did you learn from all that boxing"

"Five things"

"Five! am all ears!"

"One" I answer back "to succeed in practically all ventures, then you need a mentor. A person who has walked the path and has learnt the pitfalls. The coaches at NABA were my mentors in this regard and still are".

"I see, and the second lesson?"

"Self-discipline, Boxing is a very lonely sport, despite the big number of fans; you are alone in the ring and it can be quite stifling especially if the opponent is outclassing you. To be a successful boxer, you must make major personal sacrifices"

"Purely for interest's sake, describe for me what you mean by personal sacrifice in boxing," The marching lake asked.

"In boxing, just in any facet of life, nobody is born the best. You have to practice and train to become the best. Boxing championships are won in the gym and training not in the ring, I had to make personal

demands when the rest of the world was relaxing. I ran daily –repeat daily- every morning for three years. This was done to build staying power in the ring. The humility transcends even when you are dealing with that bully in the street. You know the power within you, and you have to practice self-restraint when you would rather unleash the power within you."

"Quite something, I must say, and the third lesson?"

"Boxing teaches you determination. Again, just like in life, being knocked out in the boxing ring is normally not the challenge, the challenge is having the –grit- guts to wake up and fight again and finally, I learnt to embrace humility. It is a brutal sport and calls for that extra dose of humility for one to go and embrace and shake hands with your opponent, who a few minutes earlier had attempted to knock your head off the neck. Boxing is the future of a peaceful world"

"And the final lesson?" The river asked

"Fan approbation, just like power is transitory- one day the light goes dead and people forget you".

"I see" the faithful voice murmured. "What followed next?"

To be an African boxing champion at my weight berth of middleweight was confirmation that there was nothing left to prove as an amateur boxer, and besides, while the heart was willing, the body was taking so long to recover from the incessant pounding. I

ignored calls to turn professional, set my face for academics, graduated and pronounced myself ready for a grittier calling.

I ventured into the Catholic priesthood.

The Priesthood Training

You must be born of sterner stuff to allow your thinking to lead you to a seminary and offer yourself to become a Catholic priest. The studies are long and demanding, the discipline and conditions of living Spartan and the prayers incessant.

It gets grittier, should you graduate to be a priest, you are obligated to make the vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience. That a Catholic priest popularly known as "Father" will never fully embrace the joys of a woman nor that of a family. Father will never be a father.

For me, it was particularly gritty, I was last on the familial line and an only child; by my career selection, my parents were never to know the joy of carrying their blood grandchild. And their hard-earned assets slaved over a lifetime would all be lost to the wind as I was to commit myself to the poverty vows.

It called for a very strong restitution to remain determined in my chosen call. The castigation from my parents and the extended family was especially ruthless.

But I held my ground and they had no option but to leave me to my desires.

After a period of orientation, I started the philosophy study; it was to last three years and it was mentally a very agonising experience.

On the first day of class, the philosophy lecturer sauntered in and asks a simple question: "*Do you exist?*"

And to the last day of the philosophy classes, almost three years later, the question remained unanswered.

But then we also dwelt on famous ancient philosophers like Descartes, Plato, Euripides, Pericles, Aristotle, Seneca, Socrates, Marcus, Aurelius and many others. In the following semester, we got acquainted with the modern philosophers, Thomas of Aquinas, Noam Chomsky, Joseph Ratzinger, Immanuel Kant and a few others.

Existentialism was vigorously interrogated same with the question on the claims of immortality of the soul. These led to a ton of arguments, with the baseline argument being:

"If the soul is immortal, then it must have existed before it was created right?"

An argument on the sanctity of life took a whole semester to digest egged on by that question asked by the French Writer Albert Camus who, grappling with a personal dilemma, had honestly asked:

A dilemma of monstrous proportion.

"Should I kill myself, or make a cup of coffee?"

He made the coffee.

We survived the ordeal that was philosophy and summarized the semester haggling on Friedrich Nietzsche's insane expression of "*God is dead*".

It took a whole week to dissect that famous argument and as a class, finally lopsidedly came to an agreement that indeed God was dead and we humanity had killed him probably because we had also created him.

After three years of philosophy, and a short break and change of lecture locations; we now ventured into the wide and confusing subject of theology.

The first lesson erased all our Sunday school notions of God being a harmless, white-bearded, friendly uncle. He was said to be a heartless god responsible for floods and genocide and destruction and poverty and carnage. He was also extremely jealous, said the first lecturer, a professor and a priest. We were dismayed. This was a seminary! It got worse, he was formless and a spirit. He added.

"*A spirit like smoke?*" I had asked.

"*No*" the answer came back promptly "*You can see smoke, you can smell it, it can be swayed by the wind, smoke starts from somewhere and finally ends up dissipating to the environment. It has an end. God is not like smoke*" The lecturer adds "*He is formless*"

"*So how do you describe God?*" I had persisted

"God is a spirit and what's more, there are three people in that same God. We call it the trinity "

"So, what is a person, then?" I asked.

The question remained unanswered until the end of the semester.

We survived those first lessons and ventured into studying the actions of another itinerant preacher named Yeshua. This man Yeshua had no credentials but himself, his father was a humble carpenter, he never led armies, had no curriculum vitae, he never wrote a book, his friends were lowly fishermen (and fishermen smell fishy!), and he preached for a mere three years no further than forty kilometres from his birthplace. He was crucified as a common scoundrel and right on the cross, as his life ebbed away, he expected that the much-heralded superior being he claimed to be his father could come over and save him. He was wrong; his much-praised father forsook him.

Yeshua today is the central figure of the human race.

We dived into the epistles of St Paul. A man was born in a small town called Tarsus (now a location in modern Syria). My heart deeply admired the character of this man formerly named Saul, a persecutor of the early Christians. Practically, this man with a burning zeal for missionary work must have been made of sterner stuff; he had killed many Christians, he had been jailed several times, he escaped death at the hands of men and three shipwrecks, he also

struggled with migraine headaches. But his convictions were strong. He was made of sterner stuff;

This great apostle wrote many letters while in prison, letters probably not replied to nor acknowledged. Today he is considered the founder of Christianity with Jesus as patron as all the precepts and tenets Christianity today ascribes to can be traced back to this man from Tarsus.

It was a release to finally conclude the theology lectures and we now dived into lectures on the doctrines of the church, the Catholic inquisition, the canon laws, and the history of the church, which were extremely interesting. It was surprising to learn that in the church's long history, there have been instances where some Popes were elected and yet were not even Christians and that the youngest Pope had been as young as eleven years. (I wondered inwardly, when the eleven-year-old pope led the prayers as used by the catholic priest-Let us pray...did he mean pray or play?)

It had been a humbling experience studying to be a priest.

I survived the tough study climate and soon I was set to be ordained to be a Catholic priest.

You need to have a sterner disposition to be a Catholic priest, and the colourful ordination portrays it picture-perfectly. The would-be priest referred to as deacon lies prostrate as a sign of total surrender and submission to the church, in some cases the prostrating priest is

covered by a shroud – an outward sign that he is now dead to the world – that he might still be in the world, but he is no longer of the world. The bishop then together with the entire congregation, recites a moving litany prayer pleading to all the angels and saints in heaven to prop up the new priest in his forthcoming duties as a special and holy person to intercede between man and God.

I became a Catholic priest; a special being with very invisible exceptional powers

"Splendid," says the murmur from the marching lake "What major lessons can you draw from your exposure as a trainee to be a priest?"

"Three major lessons and one spectacular one" "Tell me"

"One, perception gives purpose to your thoughts, actions, and ultimately everything you do. Perception is attitude and is everything in life. That the mind in its place and time can make a hell of heaven and a heaven of hell"

"A bit deep, just like my home here repeat it, please?"

I did.

"What, then, are the second and third emergent lessons? He asked again.

"Two, we can change the course of our life by actively choosing our actions instead of just reacting to our impulses and three, the will is our internal force of perseverance, ready to give us hope when

everything else fails".

"And the spectacular lesson?"

"The power of prayer, "I said "Prayer does not necessarily change the mind of God, but it subtly every time changes the person who is praying"

"So, what can you tell me next?"

I became a Catholic priest with all the glamour that goes with it.

But I was made of sterner stuff, I opted to be a missionary priest.

Everybody who knew me was aghast at my decision, my mother wept; my father gawked and blamed the genes from my maternal uncles to be responsible for such a wayward son.

Priests who opt for being missionaries join some priestly order and are supposed to work in remote areas where the message of Christ has little presence. It is only the foolhardy or the certified insane priests who opt for such tasks.

Jowi! Jowi! Jowi!

I don't know, but my missionary zeal could unconsciously be tied to the history of my local church in my hometown of Koru. The history was passed on to me by my grandfather and progressed as follows:

It was the year 1952 well before independence; the locals were considered backward in the ways of the world. They were also steeped in the traditions and heathen ways when the first missionary

priest arrived in my hometown. He came in a motorcycle accompanied by the dreaded white district commissioner called "*Bwana DC*" who was in a Land Rover escorted by several bare feet but armed and uniformed *Askaris*, the Bible always follows the flag. A colonial-appointed paramount chief was also part of the entourage. The trio had identified a lone bushy hill in the locality and for the next three days, the white man, in shorts and cap had erected a tent and managed to mobilise a work gang from the local community who erected for him a ramshackle structure which he immediately moved in.

On the first Sunday, together with an interpreter, a first mass was held in Koru under a still-standing *N'gou* tree, with the new white priest nicknamed Father Haraka presiding. My grandfather says the locals had trickled in for the mass purely for curiosity's sake.

A seed had been planted.

Father Haraka left the station in 1997, a very different face from the short trouser-wearing sprightly young man who set up base in Koru. He was now a tired old man, stiff-gaited, beady eyes hidden in big bifocals and a threadbare voice. During the farewell mass, asked to give a final word or two, unlike a priest, his voice failed him and with tears in his eyes, he merely waved to the congregation.

To a man, the women broke up in ululation and song crying, the men as per tradition shouted "*Jowi! Jowi! Jowi!*" While waving their

handkerchiefs or caps in the air.

It is hard to translate the word "*Jowi* "in the English language, in the dialect it would infer:

"You have the distinction! You have the distinction!"

Father Haraka passed on in 2002 and I suspect he is now at the mansion up in heaven, his master whom he had served diligently, had promised him up yonder. He did not have any biological child, and yet he has thousands and thousands of them now sprawled all over the globe, unconsciously spreading the gospel of this man made of sterner stuff.

68 years later, since Father Haraka set foot in the locality, the Catholic Church is now the centre of life in my hometown. There is a primary school, a girl's secondary school, a village polytechnic, a hospital, a convent, and a formation house for potential nuns. It is a complex.

Unreasonable men are resilient, they have grit. They make the environment adjust to their will.

Gritty me, joined a missionary order and after a three-month orientation in Nairobi, I was deployed to minister to a diocese in central Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC).

DRC is a huge country with a population of close to 100 million and

350 ethnic groups. Some areas of DRC are so underdeveloped and could be compared to rural Kenya in the sixties. Due to the expansive landscape, forests and other natural features, no road links the entire country, so travel is restricted mainly to the many rivers, especially the River Congo, which splits the country almost in two segments.

The country has had a horrid history. The country had been engulfed in civil war from the mid-nineties when the centre in Kinshasa had fallen and marauding gangs named *Mai Mai* under warlords ruled most of the countryside.

My posting, therefore, was in a country whose political scene was confused and uncertain. So there was a bit of apprehension on my side, especially on learning that the parish I was to serve in at a place called Pweto which had not been blessed with priestly service for a long stretch as the priest there had been killed by the local *Mai Mai* on account of being from the wrong ethnic group.

Pweto

I arrived at my parish by boat steamer. You must be made of sterner stuff; to use the boat, it chugs along at a steady speed of about 5 km per hour and had taken me a whole eight hours to cover a distance of 60 Km. I could not use a road because due to the internal strife, the roads leading to Pweto are all in a state of disrepair with the dozen or so bridges linking the territory to the rest of the country in various states of decay besides, the roads are also infested by the dreaded

Mai Mai who are bound to rob or kill.

The boat had left the city of Kisangani and was headed to another major town called Moab. It was a big, boat about 80 feet long and about twenty metres wide, with three decks with the top deck serving as first class, the lower open deck was open to the elements and five tents had been spread out with some enterprising women casually cooking in the open-air selling food to the passengers. Probably the ablutions were not in the best state because twice I saw men openly urinating into the moving river from the sides of the boat. And once, before I timely diverted my eyes, a woman shamelessly leaned over the boat guardrails, exposed herself and sprayed the river below with a burst of ammonia laden urine.

Nzambe nangai! Oh, ye gods!

The ship chugged on slowly, it was an inferno of heat, throbbing engines and oil smells. Two hundred or so goats were tethered at one corner of the boat, which added to the overall confusion with their bleating and smell.

It got more interesting as it got more confusing, the boat did not stop at the various trading centres next along the river instead as we passed these various villages, canoes from the villages with passengers and assorted farm produce would row to the boat and hitch themselves to the sides and from here the passengers would board or embark as appropriate while at the same time the normal

trading of foodstuffs and farm produce continued between the village canoes and the boat.

It was late afternoon when I alighted at the landing jetty of Pweto getting my feet wet in the bargain. I noticed a very big crowd of about 500, who were mostly dressed in some form of uniform.

Many of the women at the landing site were very heavily built; I later learnt that heaviness in a woman in this part of the world is equated with elevated social status. So, it was prestigious to put on weight; most of the women were resplendent in their beautiful and flowery "khanga" clothing which reached well below the knees.

As I stood wondering about my next move, a burly man approached me and asked from a tobacco-smelling breath.

"Papa! wewe ndiye Padre embya ya Roma Katolik?" (Boss! Are you the Roman Catholic new priest?)

I answered in the affirmative, he smiled turned around and waved at the big crowd who immediately burst into a song and in a mad frenzy of dancing started while walking uphill, I was informed by the burly man that the big crowd were the faithful who had been waiting for my arrival for the last two hours or so and that I was to accompany them to my parish church which was about 300 metres uphill from the jetty.

The Congolese have the gift of dancing and they did it so on this day to perfection; twice I found myself diverting my eyes from the

dancing troupe ahead of me since the erotic thrusts of the waist and the gyrating seemed vulgar and not very catholic in outlook. I wondered what the Vatican would think if they happened to witness the cavalier and lewd dancing.

But then I saw the hunger they had for priestly service and how much they expected from me, I silently lifted my eyes to the heavens and asked that I, a simple man, without grit, should meet their expectations.

We reached the ramshackle church, where preparations for a big party were in full swing. I conducted the first mass outdoors - wet feet and all as the church was deemed not spacious enough. It was the first mass in the parish for more than 11 months. The atmosphere was electrifying, and I knew I had found my calling.

After the mass, a big party was held in my honour where I was served with the best morsel of meat I have ever taken. I asked for a second helping and a third one, the organizers were appreciative of my good appetite. The chef smiled indolently. Later I learnt that the delicious morsels were from a dog puppy which was yet to start barking.

At dusk, I was let into my house; it was a one-bedroom iron sheet house without a ceiling board and no electricity. There was an outdoor pit latrine and adjacent bathroom facilities with yellow containers for water to be used for ablutions.

Early in the evening, the entire compound was locked and everybody

left save for an old toothless watchman who looked one hundred years remaining as my security and for the lone church building. I spent my most lonely night in the world reciting the holy rosary with aggressive mosquitos, enjoying rare English-speaking blood.

This has been my home for the last four months and my only contact with the outside world has been my transistor radio, which connects to the local Kenyan stations only at midnight before fizzling out at about 2 a.m. Mobile telephony does not work and every once a week, I visit the nearest centre where there is the presence of the resemblance of government services and where I can use the traditional phone to talk to the diocesan headquarters and the rest of the world too.

Even St Paul, the most zealous missionary, could not have found it tougher, but am made of sterner stuff and I have found my soul here.

"Kolo milieki mingi le, Romano Katolike?"- The murmur from the river talks in Lingala which translated means:

"What are the lessons you have gathered from interaction with the Roman Catholic Church?"

My interaction with the Catholic Church has brought the following to the fore for me, which can be applicable in life.

The Catholic Church is a powerful brand and the most successful and

oldest institution on earth today. It has outlived the Roman Empire, the British Empire, and will outlive the American commercial avarice, arrogance, and individualism. The strong lessons that any business can pick from this brand are:

- *Quality-* Any business to last long like the Catholic Church needs to have and maintain high standards. You can see it in the quality of the vestments of the Catholic Church in the equipment used on the altar, on the quality of their clergy. They are tip top.
- *Vision/Mission-* The church has identified their vision and mission and is focused on that despite what the rest of the world is saying. This consistency has led to many heretics from Henry VIII and Luther and many other but the church is unconcerned it does its bit and continues to soar.
- *Training-* Tied to her high standards, the church identifies the potential workers to "*Its Vineyard*" and gives them that appropriate training. It takes seven years to train one priest, in any endeavour, head hunting for good staff is absolutely necessary and to get the best from them, they need to get the appropriate added training. You lift them, they lift you.
- *Structures/ Standards/Brand-* The church has set structures and fails not to deviate from them. The same standards witnessed here in *Ponda Mali* Kenya are the same as those witnessed in Papua Guinea in the China seas. Same should be with business

enterprises since good successful business standards lead to franchising.

- *Discipline*- The church insists on strict discipline for the faithful and is particularly strict that the clergy enforce the disciplinary procedures.
- *Kaizen*- This is a Japanese term meaning change for the better or continuous improvement. Kaizen sees improvement in productivity as a gradual and methodical process. The Catholic Church is a strong advocate for this philosophy. Their changes are gradual but they change and this is done through short bursts every five years when the princes of the church sit at the Vatican and discuss the prospects of the church. Kaizen is important for personal tasks and especially so for an enterprise. Individual members of the clergy are also periodically to have a "retreat" to recharge and remain fresh and relevant to the faithful.
- *Faith*- a dedication to faith imbues a strong sense of resilience.

Finally, I hopelessly called out to the great river: Answer my question" *Am I made of sterner stuff?*"

The faithful river answered in the local dialect: "*Kitoko Makassi! Kitoko Makassi! Kitoko Makasi!*" which roughly translates as :

Jowi! Jowi! Jowi!

Chater 16



CASE STUDY II

SEEKING HARMONY



The Orient Philosophy

It is very likely that you who are reading this will not cross into the next century. Different people may process this sentence in any manner of ways; many will process it with shock and a few others with stoic indifference, depending, of course, with the personalities, situation, age, state of health, occupation, culture, and gender and so on. Strictly speaking, though, the presented information should not matter much, because the journey is the destination after all.

But then hope springs eternal. A recent scientific journal points out that the person who is likely to live well into the next century and depart aged at about 150 years is already born and up and about. It is also likely that this person may have been born in the Orient and is presently being schooled in the oriental way of thinking and living.

Why the Orient? There are many varieties of Eastern thought: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, among others. Their common attribute is that they seek balance with nature through transformations in consciousness, feelings, emotions and one's relation with one another.

The most visible manifestation of this oriental thought though is manifested in the Chinese symbol shown below referred to as the Yin-Yang, which depicts the classic interlocking depicting the complementary forces that make up all aspects and phenomena of life and all that is universal.

Yin is a symbol of earth; femaleness, darkness, receptivity, passivity, and absorption, the negative aspects of nature. Yang is conceived as of heaven: masculine, active, external; the positive aspects of nature. Yin and Yang are not merely opposites but exist in a state of dynamic complementation, expressing the balance in nature.

The common oriental, therefore, has somewhat sought and attained some balance by embracing nature in totality, and this can be seen in of any overindulgence. He has also developed awareness and

acceptance with grace and respect for the realities of life and death; He does not attempt to bully nature, but tries to flow with it in his daily endeavours, which partly explains why he is going to outlive you.

But to be fully human is to cultivate some healthy interaction with others, but these relationships can only be harmonious and of mutual benefit if it is embraced within some set parameters which translate to boundaries.

Boundaries

Nations and states especially are identified by the mapped geographical boundaries. They will rarely take up arms and march to war on account of ideologies, but then nations consider tampering with the boundary as an existential threat and would readily go to war.

Boundaries are a way to take care of ourselves. When you understand how to set and maintain healthy boundaries, you can avoid any feelings of resentment, disappointment, and anger that build up when limits have been pushed.

At personal levels, we have boundaries too; Personal boundaries are established by changing one's response to interpersonal situations, rather than expecting other people to change their behaviours to comply with your set boundary.

My short stint broad comes to mind.

I, together with 24 other participants from across the world, was privileged to visit the United States of America (USA) for a three-month international course. Americans were forming the bulk of the course, making it only reasonable that we be acquainted with some "dos" and "don'ts" of the American society.

Our host, a big wheezing man, gave us a pep talk on matters we were obligated to follow. One, he said, Americans love their personal space, which sits at a radius of about arm's length. Any attempted reduction of this unmarked space makes them feel crowded and uncomfortable, hindering any ongoing verbal communication.

He continued, it is also exceptionally rude to offer a hand for a handshake or worse, attempt to hug an American; the common American detests such open shows of affection, reserving them only for family and very close friends. The typical American, he pointed out he was comfortable with a mere nod as a greeting.

Personal issues were another sacrosanct point. Our host impressed us that the typical American keeps his matters very confidential. We visitors, too, were asked to be wary of bringing up personal related issues such as age, family, marital status, religion and even political affiliations during normal out-of-class conversations.

Our burly American went on, sexual interactions with the female American is extremely sensitive, he said, since the typical American

lady is so extroverted and outgoing there is the danger that as a foreigner one might get wrong ideas and subsequently make uncalled for seductive moves which might be considered ill-advised to lead to possible grave circumstances.

Other personal space issues brought up during the pep talk included issues over emotional, intellectual and financial boundaries, which too were considered equally important in creating harmony in the daily grind of life.

Social media, depicted as "Big Brother" is yet another emergent challenge. We live in a world where social media today is ubiquitous and limited boundaries but still dominant in our daily lives and has been the cause of anguish for many a personality.

Desert Rules

The issue of boundaries personal space and assertiveness takes a very strong context in the desert environment. In the desert, water and pasture for animals are scarce and generally life is tough. Therefore, no quarters are given for any perceived slight. Journalist Thomas Friedman succinctly sums up this desert state of affairs in the management of boundaries in his book *"From Beirut to Jerusalem"* He writes:

"An elderly Bedouin man discovered that by eating turkey, he could restore his virility. So, he bought himself a turkey and he kept it around the tent, and every day he watched it grow. He stuffed it with

food, thinking, wow, I am going to be a bull. One day, though, the turkey was stolen. So, the Bedouin called his sons together and said, "Boys, we are in great danger now— terrible danger. My turkey's been stolen." The boys laugh and says, "Father, what do you need a turkey for?" He says, "Never mind, never mind. It is not important why I need the turkey; all that is important is that it has been stolen, and we must get it back."

But his sons ignored him and forgot about the turkey. A few weeks later, the old man's camel was stolen. His sons came to him and says, "Father, your camel's been stolen, what should we do?" And the old man said, "Find my turkey."

A few weeks later, the old man's horse was stolen, and the sons came and said,

"Father, your horse was stolen, what should we do? "

He says, "Find my turkey." Finally, a few weeks later, someone raped his daughter.

The father went to his sons and said,

"It is all because of the turkey. When they saw that they could take my turkey, we lost everything. "

That is the essence of having boundaries, personal space, and assertiveness.

Boundaries are the pillars of relationships, they are the rules we put in place that stop people imposing their wills on us. It all starts with

learning to say "no" when somebody assumes rights of entitlement over you.

Assertiveness.

It is sometimes easy to overstep boundaries without realising because all people have different sets of them.

Assertiveness therefore is a manner of teaching people how they are supposed to treat you. Whereas, being assertive can help you spell out your needs without damaging relationships; a lack of assertiveness, on the other hand, can impact your mental health and damage your relationships as you would always feel that you are being taken advantage of and your personal space and boundary are straddled on.

There is, however, a danger that assertiveness can be mistaken for aggression. That should not be so; assertiveness should come from a place of calm and rationality instead of working from anger, hurt, or resentment. Assertiveness, in most cases resolves conflict, especially if the message is passed diplomatically with a stronger body language and posture.

Silence too sometimes speaks; silence therefore, can also be a subtle manner of passing an assertive message, since at appropriate moment silence can speak in a very loud no-nonsense manner.

Self-Care

Tied to boundaries and personal space, a new concept that is now in vogue is the concept of self-care. Self-care is a broad term for anything we do for ourselves solely for the purpose of looking after our bodies or minds. It means looking after your physical, emotional and social needs. Self-care has gained recent prominence due to the emergence of individualism, the modern fast life, unending hustles and social media that have negated personal quality time.

Self-care today is considered one of the most integral aspects of life that an individual can master. It is a lifesaving technique which is hinged on the popular narrative that says: "*an unexamined life is not worth living*". Knowing thyself is the first step to self-awareness.

Self-awareness revolves around being aware of the unique aspects of the self, which include traits, behaviours and feelings. Essentially, it is a psychological state in which oneself becomes the centre of attention.

Self-care can be described as a "feel good" factor. Taking care of people in need, doing random acts of charity, empowering someone, and being their blessing in moments of need, is a very good way of self-care and as you do this, be careful about what you say to yourself, because you are supposed to listen to yourself So that you can at the end of the day have a sense of inner satisfaction, that you have made someone's life better.

Ways to Self-Care

Always keep in mind that practising self-care is a path that is unique to each individual. When creating your self-care regimen, it's critical to take your requirements, preferences, and limitations into consideration. Some of the major ways to self-care include:

- ***Working out*** regular exercises leads to immense benefits both physically and mentally.
- ***Looking Good and feeling nice***-At your level of comfort and affordability, try to look great. Socialization is an innate attribute of all humans and we cannot separate our outward appearance from others. Dressing nicely for any occasion is what entails here.
- ***Acts of Charity***- Giving back to the community shapes your conversation and thinking and way of life and then blessings
- ***Hobbies***- Have something you enjoy doing which makes you feel good and appreciate your efforts. Let it be a healthy and positive habit- not alcohol and not gambling.
- ***Me time***- This is the time to focus on you and nothing else. No significant others, no work, no friends, no social media. Learning to love your own company is an all-time worthy investment.
- ***Aboriginal Walkabout***- The natives of Australia, the aborigines when frequently finding themselves overwhelmed with the demands of daily living, take a long lonely walk to the outback with the walkabout lasting a long duration, sometimes even

several months with the native living off the land; it can be compared to the hibernation of some animals. When the Aborigine comes back to his society, it is said they come back looking younger and seemingly much refreshed, with new ideas to rejuvenate their society's livelihood. In our more modern situation and space restrictions, Aboriginal walkabouts might not be an easy option, but planning and taking a trip could be the magic wand. Travel is excellent because it physically removes you from your current stressful environment and pushes you to do something different.

- ***Prioritize Sleep:*** Get the quantity and quality of sleep you need; sleep is essential for maintaining optimum mental health.
- ***Seeking Support-*** If you think you're experiencing significant mental health challenges, it's advisable to seek support from mental health professionals who can provide more personalized guidance and assistance.
- ***Be spiritual-*** Seek and maintain a personal relationship with God, be at peace with him whatever you conceive him to be and the only way to maintain this relationship is by prayer and meditation. Prayer does not necessarily change the mind of God every time, but at least it changes the mind of the person who prays.

Yes, self-care has been shown to improve mental health. Engaging

in regular self-care activities can help reduce stress, improve overall well-being, enhance resilience and improve overall mental health. It involves taking intentional actions to prioritize and nurture your physical, emotional, and mental health.

Counselling

Life being what it is, some personalities might find it hard to define the limits of their boundaries and personal space, some might find it hard too to assert themselves or when embracing self-care, there might be a need to seek professional guidance. Counselling therefore becomes a necessity. The person seeking counselling therefore invites another person to provide him or her with time and space characterized by the presence of several features that are not readily available in everyday life: encouragement, respect for difference, confidentiality and affirmation.

The need for counselling in the country, however, persists and is so seriously needed if the daily calls asking for personal advice on the local radio stations are anything to go by.

Counselling is a place where the person can tell their story, where they are given every encouragement to give voice to aspects of their experience that have previously been silenced, in their own time and their way, including the expression of feeling and emotion.

The potential outcomes of counselling can be understood as falling into three broad categories:

- Resolution of the original issue in living. Resolution can include achieving an understanding or perspective on the problem, arriving at a personal acceptance of the problem or dilemma, and taking action to change the situation in which the problem arose.
- Learning. Engagement with counselling may enable the person to acquire new understandings, skills and strategies that make them better able to handle similar problems in the future.
- Social inclusion. Counselling stimulates the energy and capacity of the person as someone who can contribute to the well-being of others and the social good.

Other issues where an interaction with the counsellor can be handy are:

- Acquisition of social skills - Social skills would entail acquiring learning and mastering social and interpersonal skills, such as maintenance of eye contact, turn-taking in conversations or anger control.
- Cognitive change - The modification or replacement of irrational beliefs or maladaptive thought patterns associated with self-destructive behaviour.
- Behaviour change - The modification or replacement of maladaptive or self-destructive patterns of behaviour.
- Empowerment- Working on skills, awareness and knowledge

that will enable the client to take control of his own life.

- Restitution - Helping the client to make amends for previous destructive behaviour.

Self-Actualization

This is a Western world concept developed by Abraham Maslow, a research scientist on human sexuality, who formulated the hierarchy of needs and coined the word self-actualisation. Unlike the Eastern world concept, it is bent on individualism with a thought pattern of achieving harmony by personal surrender and effort. He wrote:

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. "

In Maslow's, hierarchy of needs, the lowest need is the physiological needs which are food, shelter, clothing and sex-the requirements of healthy functioning of the body and the continuance of the species. Security appears next in Maslow's hierarchy. This is the need to know that our world is stable and predictable, and the confidence that gains made can be conserved. The denial of this need leads to tension, anxiety, fear, panic and self-absorption.

The need to be a valued member of a group and the confirmation that others find us likeable is the third ladder in the hierarchy of Maslow's needs. He called it social needs. Esteem needs come next in the hierarchy of needs. This is the need for recognition and prestige. The

basis of self-respect knowing that we as individuals count for something.

Maslow's Ladder of Needs

Self-actualization appears on the top rung of Maslow's hierarchy of needs ladder. This is the need to continuously develop in ways which are personally important to the individual.

Self-actualization is only possible if the lower needs have been sufficiently met so that they do not detract from or engross a person's basic energies rather than organize their behaviour toward tension reduction.

Maslow argues that the self-actualized is an ideal, but given skill, knowledge and commitment, every individual has the power to create that ideal.

The Balanced Person

A harmonious personality has found balance in life. It is visible in his bearing and gait. He, like any other person, has his normal daily grind, struggling to put food on the table for his family, but he struggles honestly, making honest profit and not keen to take advantage of situations and people. We may list his other positive outlooks as follows:

- Having close relationships with family, friends and others as he provides a sense of connection, support and purpose.

- He gets engaged in activities that challenge him, learning new things and pursuing his passions to help his personal growth as an individual and feels a sense of accomplishment.
- He strives to take care of his physical and mental health through exercise, healthy eating and self-care to improve his quality of life and help him feel more resilient.
- The balanced person has a truly good relationship with the superior being others might call God. He makes special time with this superior being; everything he does feels connected to this purpose.
- He appreciates nature and admires that flower, and the mountain, and the moon and the stars and talent and works of art.
- He has that normal degree of fear towards death, but it is not a debilitating phobia that keeps him awake at night.
- He takes time to be involved in community and public affairs because he wants to improve his lot too as he lifts others. He is a pillar of his local community.
- He does not overindulge in anything, food, drinking, resources, sports, (not even Arsenal of the English Premier League!) religion or even ideology. He knows that there is a limit to everything.
- He has his personal space, his boundaries, and will react and

correct the imbalance if he feels you have overstepped his space.

- He is constantly growing and learning; he is an avid reader and listener, liking to learn new things; he re-learns and also knows when to re-learn.
- He has learnt to cultivate patience in his life, knowing that all things are difficult before becoming easy.
- He makes time to travel, try new things and enjoy hobbies or activities that bring him joy, creating positive memories and enhancing his overall well-being.
- He has trained himself to know that social media and technology are important, but then he has also trained himself to put these in their rightful place.

From the above, it can be seen that the picture drawn of these people is a composite. The description does NOT imply perfection but a higher level of functioning. Such a person has found balance in his life; he is in harmony with himself.

And who maybe fits this bill?

It has been argued in some academic circles that only about 2% of the world's population attains and maintains the self-actualizing mode and has achieved a resemblance of perfect harmony in life. The lord Buddha springs to mind, and then there is the Dalai Lama whose holiness is visible and appreciated even by animals; There is the

father of peaceful protests in India, Mahatma Gandhi, Saint Paul of the bible whose final words –*race, I have finished, Faith, I have kept*– are especially moving, Mother Teresa of Kulkat, South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Pope John Paul II, Pope John the 23, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, President Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, explorer David Livingstone, theologian and physician Albert Schweitzer, USA one time first lady Ambassador Eleanor Roosevelt, and even former USA president Jimmy Carter have been mentioned in that respect.

Locally, and this is my own interpretation subject to the natural bias that the following personalities due to their demeanour may have attained balance in their lives and subsequent harmony. Blessed Maurice Cardinal, Otunga, retired arch Bishop Eliud Wabukhala, Magnate Manu Chandaria, has been the face of humility and philanthropy. Mama Fatima has for the last forty years almost single-handedly run children's homes, depending entirely on well-wishers and charity for its sustenance. Athletes Eliud Kipchoge and Kipchoge Keino have remained humble despite their exploits in the International Sporting Arena. Former First Lady Margaret Kenyatta restored some dignity in the house on the hill and remains a respected mother figure to the nation. These mentioned personalities people depict some inner unexplained calm despite the turmoil that could be within. They are at peace with themselves; they have found harmony in their lives.

Whereas the personalities mentioned all seem to be in the top league of human success- But still they are still many unsung heroes in our communities – local pastors, village elders, school teachers, the youth coach, that Sunday school teacher- who have in their way attained the status giving back to society expecting nothing but doing it for God. They are rarely noticed -their modesty would not allow them- but indeed they exist and are the pillars of each society.

Final Thoughts

As a counselling psychologist, I am in the talking business, spending much of my day working with individuals in psychotherapy. Individual therapy is, for many folks, the one place where they can say basically anything that they want; the most unfiltered and uncensored version of their truth. They can be the rawest, the more vulnerable and at times, the bare sides of themselves that they typically hide from the rest of the world.

This book has offered a glimpse of the routine of the life of an active therapist in Kenya and admittedly, it is a very fulfilling calling. The only disappointment to any therapist is the failure to fully follow up a case in its entirety that there are limits to where the individual therapist has to stop and let the client finish the journey alone. That success in therapy cannot be defined by a therapist, the client may only succeed if she takes responsibility for her own mental health.