

Not long ago I made a new acquaintance. As we were doing the get-to-know-you dance, the conversation steered toward "...and what do you do?" When I told her that one of the roles I had was that of a psychotherapist, she cocked her head and leaned in a little closer. "I've always wanted to know what kind of person actually goes to therapy." She went on, "What kind of people do you see?"

"People just like you and me," was the best answer I had for her that day.

We've all got problems, we've all had dreams. And we're all more similar than different, all of us very human beings. Each and every one of us longs to know others and we long to be known by others. We long for connection.

For some of us, the dream of living a satisfying life has gotten stuffed under the pillows, smothered by the hard stuff of living. Sadly, sometimes we lose sight of what we want, what we dream of, so that we don't even know our own dream.

That is we don't know it, until we see someone who's living the life we envisioned for ourselves. As one young man told me, he wanted to scream at a friend, "Wait, I think you got my life! Come back here with it!"

While there are definitely times when individuals see a therapist due to disorders that have made life totally unmanageable, it's just as likely that a person will call because, like this fellow went on to say, "I just don't feel like I'm hitting on all my cylinders. There's got to be more to life than this!"

As our young man alludes, life may become nothing more than going to work, to make money, to cook supper, to go to bed, to get up, to go to work and do it all over again.

Our dreams, if not given breathing room and attention, will eventually suffocate. Whether every dream is fully realized is not so much the issue as is the hope that comes from having our visions nurtured by ourselves and others.

Thus, a client may come in with the remnant of a dream, and, as a result of engaging in the therapeutic process, breathe new life into that image.

Suzy may come in despondent about the relationships in her life and develop new roles for relating to others that are more in line with her vision for herself. Jeff may come in wanting to relate to his son in a different way, finding ways to truly know his son and himself better in the process.

Mary may come in overwhelmed by grief for her deceased husband and get in touch with a part of herself that can both honor the relationship that was and also continue living vibrantly in the

present. Sam may find himself miserable in his career and, with support, design a work role that's much closer to what he wants for himself.

Dave might come in and find that the dream he thought he had to live out, well, it's changed and he's been hanging onto the past. Time to grieve it and let it go, so a new dream can surface.

Whatever a person's dream, in effective therapy that dream can be recognized and attended to. Individual sessions and, especially, group psychotherapy sessions provide a setting where a deeper knowing may take place for the client. In a focused, mindful way, hopes and dreams are given the attention they must have to grow.

In fact, the word therapy itself derives from a Greek word, therapeia, meaning "to serve." More specifically, it focuses on giving attention and consideration to another. In Greek, the therapon, was the healer who gave this personal supportive service. Speaking of dreams, one of my own dreams is that, as a therapist, I continue to provide that service today.

Take a moment to reflect upon what you long for in life.

- In your dreams, what does your life look like?
- What colors, textures, and scents accompany this image?
- Who gives attention and validation to your hopes and dreams?
- Who helps you fulfill your dreams?
- Are you spending so much time and energy making a living that you're not making the life you dream of?

What kind of people come to therapy? People who want to breathe life into their hopes and dreams. People just like you and me. It's still the best answer I have.

