

To Christchurch With Love: Family, Neighbourhood and Community Responses to Earthquake-related Trauma

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The city of Christchurch was struck first on September, 4th, 2010 by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake. The epicenter was 25 miles west of the city. A second earthquake (6.3) struck the city but this time only 6 miles south-east of the city not only devastating the central business centre but incurring so much loss of life that it became the fourth most deadly disaster recorded in New Zealand history. Approximately 50% of the city centre was destroyed or will have to be demolished. On June 13, the city was struck again (6.3) this time from 8 miles away. Aftershocks (some over 5 on the Richter scale) were intermittent over this period of time and are continuing.

On hearing from colleagues, especially those services for children and families the concerns, I resolved to see if I might contribute in some way even from relatively afar. New Zealand is a very small country and everyone had family or friends or indeed family and friends of family and friends who resided in Christchurch. Everyone tried to find ways to contribute firstly to the emergencies created and then to the rebuilding in the widest sense of that word of the city and its populace.

1) The Renewal of Bravery

This was conceived in response to learning that many young people were finding it difficult to go very far from their homes except to designated safe havens like their schools. Parents were also growing concerned that their children were very reluctant to returning to sleep in their own beds after having shared their parents' beds for several weeks.

I gave considerable thought to an 'approach' to such problems or even what might be considered not so much a 'problem' but rather a 'normal response' eg. rehabilitation to a series of traumas. For that reason, I refer to this matter as 'getting your bravery back'. I wrote this up on behalf of a colleague who had consulted me about the above in regard to Billy, aged 8.

THIS PROPOSAL IS FOR FATHER/SONS:

I suggest something of this sort to take up with Billy's parents, but in particular his father.

I might introduce this matter in with the following prologue:

“It is not at all surprising that Billy, who was just getting on with his bravery like any normal eight year old boy might have , should have a knock-back with all the worry about the shakes and after-shocks that have beset his city, surroundings, family, friends and school. This could shake anyone's confidence and unsettle them, let alone a boy Billy's age. And on top of that, everyone is concerned with the reconstruction of their homes, lives and the city itself from hereon in. This earthquake and its memories

cannot be shaken off just like that, given the constant reminders as Billy goes about his life in the earthquake-shattered city and the after-shocks that will persist for some time to come.

Bravery, like fitness, needs exercising; that is certainly the case in the early stages of a young person's life if it is going to last for very long. Once you have been trained in bravery, it will last but in saying that if you have to endure a number of traumatic events, it can be shaken up and it will take time to settle down again. And everyone knows that it doesn't take that long to lose your fitness. An obvious example of this happening is when you have to have bed rest for several weeks after a complicated surgery. Everyone knows you are pretty shaky on your feet for a day or two.

Through no fault of his own or a failure on his part, Billy has very likely suffered a bravery set-back, like so many other young people around his age will very likely have experienced. After all, not only Billy but his family has had to deal with fear for all the months since the first quake last year, what with all the after-shocks and then the second even more devastating quake recently. In fact, I suspect you (parents) might be feeling the same way- as if your life, instead of going forwards as you may very well have expected it to go, may seem for awhile yet to be going sideways or even backwards.

You know the old saying about falling off a horse which advises you to get back on and start riding as soon as it is possible for you to do so. Well, this 'approach to getting your bravery back' keeps that in the back of its proverbial mind thinking 'the longer you wait, the harder it is to get back up and ride after a spill'.

This is how this 'approach to getting your bravery back' goes. It is somewhat against the grain in that you (father) take the lead in an odd sort of way that both acknowledges and respects that if Billy is fearful, this is no fault of his own and he should not consider himself a failure as a brave kid. This could happen if we don't take an initiative, such as what this proposes below, and get him back up on his horse.

The Way To Go About It:

1) Could you speak to Billy on his own and say to him something along these lines:

"Son(or Billy), I have been thinking a fair bit about things the last few weeks. And what I have got to say to you isn't the usual thing a father my age says to his eight year old son. Because it is most usual for a father my age to always be there and stand tall for a son your age. But ever since the quakes and after-shocks, to be honest, I have lost a fair bit of myself and find that I am not as brave as I once was and how you used to know me. I was doing pretty well after the first quakes and after-shocks but this one and the afters has really started to get on my nerves. And I can see if I 'don't get back on my horse' pretty soon, it is going to be harder for me. Son, have you heard that old saying- 'if you get thrown off a horse, the best thing to do is to get back up on your horse as soon as you can and start riding again'. That is something your grandfather used to say to me when I was your age when I would lose my nerve about something I wanted to do. To be honest, son, I am not quite sure of how my life will go forwards now as I walk through it with everything that has happened and everything that has to happen to reconstruct our city, buildings, homes and schools.

But, son, I know one thing for certain and that is bravery does not grow on trees. It is like fitness, you have to practice it when you or anyone else has a set-back in life like I have had and our family have had. Son, I am going to ask you for a real favour, a favour I never thought I would ever ask you for".

Leave some time for Billy to ask you what the favour you are going to ask him for is...

"Son, I need you to lend me a hand. Will you come on some secret mystery adventures with me every saturday(or sunday) morning at say 10 am. That is of course unless we have to do something else even more important than me getting my bravery back like your football games. Son, I am sure if you come along with me, I will have no trouble finding my way through any adventures we find ourselves in. You can hold my hand any time you guess I am losing my nerve. And can I ask you to lend me your hand if I feel am losing my nerve and you can't guess I am? After all, I will very likely be the first one to figure that out."

2) "We will pack enough food (make sure you include some foodstuffs that Billy is crazy about!!), water and warm clothes in case we lose our way and have to find another way back to the car and home. We will each carry our own backpack of emergency rations and water just in case we have a bigger adventure that I thought we would have. You never know with mystery adventures, do you?"

Why an adventure you might ask? Well, if we just walked around a park we know really well, that wouldn't be much of a test of our bravery, would it? It would just be a walk around the park. We are going to have to go to places we have never been before if we are going to have some

adventures so I can get 'back up on my horse' and start feeling sure about knowing the way in my life again even if it is a different way that I was heading before the quakes and after-shocks. There has to be some adventure, don't you think, son? I can't get back up on my horse by sitting at home watching TV, now can I?"

3) Advise Billy's father to get a map of Christchurch and environs and plot out some 'adventure' walks in areas they have never tramped/walked in before. Suggest that he build up some suspense of the 'mystery' by saying at the beginning of their journey- "This adventure will have to take place away from home if it is to be an adventure and a mystery. And I will tell you when we are getting close to the beginning of our adventure." However, advise him that the first mysterious adventure take place reasonably close to home and that he go further afield each subsequent weekly adventure. Advise the father to say to Billy every so often- "Hey son, we are only two kilometres or so away from the beginning of our adventure". When they arrive at his destination, advise him to turn to Billy and say, especially if he suspects Billy has become apprehensive:

"Son, I know I am a brave father but ever since the shakes and after-shocks, I have lost my way a bit. Will you hold my hand tightly until I tell you I am finding my ways thanks to your bravery?"

Not long after disengaging his hand, advise him to say to Billy: "Wow, your bravery has got in to me and is now mine. I feel really brave again thanks to your bravery. It is like I am back on my horse again riding. Let's go and have a really good adventure in the bush!"

4) Every so often, advise Billy's father to stop at a nice spot for 'emergency rations'. He might say something

along these lines to Billy:

"Son, I am thankful to you for giving me some of your bravery. I am not going to forget this. I want you to know that from now on, you can come to me any time- day or night- if you lose your way or your bravery. That is how we do things in our family between a father and a son. Is that okay with you, son?"

5) Every so often along their way in the later stages of their mystery adventure, advise the father to comment on how his son is helping him find his way in life and to continually remind Billy that should he ever need 'a hand', he will be really happy to lend him one from now on, night or day!

6) When they return home, advise the father to relate what became of him and Billy on the mystery adventure in some detail. This telling might be initiated by Billy's mother waiting for them with some anticipation and asking his father:

"I have wondered all day when you guys were on your mystery adventure how you would get on and would you find your way. What happened?"

Advise the father to say something of this sort:

"You won't believe this but we had a real adventure finding our way around x park/bush walk. You know how lately after the quakes and aftershocks, I have lost my way a bit in life and my nerve. Well, I asked Billy if he would lend me his hand and pass over some of his bravery to me if I lost my way on our mystery adventure. I had to ask him three times before I felt I could find my way through the adventure. You may think it is odd for a father of my age

to ask his eight year old son to lend him a hand. And that it should be the other way around! Well, I have learned something today. Billy can lend me a hand some times when I need a hand; I can lend him a hand whenever he needs a hand too! I have talked to Billy about this and we agreed this is a good idea for a father and a son in our family. But we wondered if it is okay with you if Billy lends me a hand when I lose my way and need back up on my horse; and if I lend him a hand when he loses his way in his life and needs a hand to get back up on his horse? After all, we all have lost our way a bit since the shakes and aftershocks, haven't we? But perhaps when we are all older, we will look back on this and say thanks to one another for learning how to lend one another a hand when one or all of us lose our ways in our lives."

Advise the mother to respond but suggest she direct her comments first to Billy:

"Billy, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for lending your dad a hand. I was concerned he had lost his way and when he would get back up on his horse."

Then advise her to turn her gaze towards Billy's father:

"And I can see Billy that your dad is well and truly back on his horse right now thanks to you. That is not to say with all our family is going through that he or you might not fall off your horse again. But what you both have taught me today is how we all can lend on another a hand if we do. We all have a very good family which believes that 'all for one and one for all' when it comes to bravery and knowing what direction we are heading in our lives. Billy, I am grateful to you for doing what you did on your mystery adventure and love you today even more than I knew I loved you. Why? Because you lent your dad a hand and

know that if you fall off your horse and lose your nerve, you can call on your dad or me to lend you a hand. Billy, if you become a father some day and have a son, I know you will do something the same."

7) As you might expect, after a mystery adventure, the adventurers, even despite their emergency rations, will be pretty hungry and will need a good 'feed'. You might have this waiting for them heating on the stove or in the oven. His mother especially acknowledge him : "Billy, I am serving a very big portion because you have taught our family a lesson we are never going to forget even after Christchurch is reconstructed and we start forgetting about the shakes and the aftershocks".

Of course, this can be varied in any number of ways. I have merely chosen father-son as the adventurers; there is no reason why any other combination of family relationships cannot be deployed in similar ways (even with less elaboration). In the above, I have gone to some lengths to elaborate this 'approach' so that the 'spirit' of 'all for one and one for all' inheres in almost everything that takes place.

2. Alternative Sources of Bravery: A Ritual for the Transfusion of Bravery from One Who Has More than enough for the time being to another who needs to 'transfused' after having temporarily 'lost' their bravery. (1)

Bravery and its transmission from one to another can be thought of much like a blood transfusion. As is well

known, most people in good health have more blood than they need at any one time. As a result of this, they can safely transfuse their blood either into a 'blood bank' or directly into a recipient who urgently requires blood due to its loss through injury or surgery. The donor merely requires a few minutes to recover and after a well sugared cup of tea, they are on their way again. However, they go away with a sense that their life's blood is either now supporting the life of another or will do so in the very near future. I consider that bravery has been similarly transfused from one to another from time immemorial. In what follows is my attempt to render what I consider to be relatively commonplace as a family or communal 'ritual,' which can be performed at almost any time or a place. I use the term ritual as when I considered its commonplace occurrences, I realized these 'transfusions of bravery' took place almost always under extraordinary circumstances whereby one is responding to an emergency of another.

Just as well known are some facts about bravery 'spreading around' even under the most dire circumstances. For example, let's consider the aerial bombardment or Blitz of London which began in Sept. 7, 1940 and continued on for 57 consecutive nights.

The sociologist, Richard Titmuss summarized this: "The experts foretold a mass outbreak of hysterical neurosis among the civilian population.....Under this strain, many people would regress to an earlier level of needs and desires. They would behave like frightened children"(Titmuss, R., p. 224) How differently matters turned out. Rebecca Solnit writes: "And the Blitz stands alone as almost the only time when the way that most people behave in disaster has been highlighted rather than missed, though it highlighted it as something specific to wartime or to Britain rather than the way things usually

go'(p. 209). I do not believe that the camaraderie in the Underground and the resilience of the city of London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom were unique. I am sure everyone in Christchurch will have a deeper understanding and appreciation of wartime Londoners that many other New Zealanders might have.

The question I have been asking myself recently and have been for some time is this- how can one who considers him/herself to have more of this stuff we refer to as 'bravery' than they currently require transfuse it in to another who has 'lost' their bravery or who urgently needs more than they currently have available to them? I reviewed several occasions in my past when I was on the verge of panic when either a nurse or friend took my hand and pressed his/her hand into mine and immediately I felt my fear subside and the renewal of my bravery. When I thought about it, it was as if their bravery had been 'transfused' in to me when I was depleted. Often, the resurgence of my bravery seemed almost instantaneous. It was far more than a hand-shake of greeting; it seemed to me such 'transfusions' were something else altogether. I continually returned to these experiences that were spontaneously undertaken in order to review them. Could they be turned in to rituals of 'bravery transfusions'? I was sure they could be but how?

It was around this time that in the course of my work in services for young people and their families (from around 1980-2000) that I would be confronted with the problem of Fear which was making it difficult or impossible for a young person to merely go about their normal lives: for example go outside their home, sleep in their own bed, attend school, or sleep over at friends or relatives. I set about with the agreement of their very willing parents to try out the possibility of 'transfusing' their bravery (which after

due consideration, they had agreed they had more than enough of it to conduct their lives) in to their children. When discussing this as an abstraction or a theory, I know that some parents and most of the young people looked at me askance. If I put 'words' to the suspicious looks and sideways glances, they may have very well read- 'what in the world is David blathering about!'.

For that reason alone, I carefully researched any time a family applied this ritual of 'bravery transfusions' to Fear Problems and found that according to their children, the 'transfusions' were credited with on average 40% of their newfound Bravery. I might add here that many parents when asked to estimate what contribution they thought their bravery transfusions had made to their son/daughter's newfound Bravery guessed far less- on average 8%. Perhaps they purposefully underestimated so as to not take anything away from their children. However, I recall in some instances how surprised parents were when their children acknowledged the extent of the significance of their transfusions. In fact, many of these newfound Braveries were so substantial and occurred seemingly overnight that both the young person and the parents were entirely confounded. (Epston, 2011, Epston et al, 2004). With these informal research results, I was able to reassure both parties that some veterans of bravery come-backs had reported similar results to theirs. In fact, the results of bravery transfusions in addition to my therapy approach(see Freeman, Epston and Lobovits(1997) bore far better results that anything I had read of in the more conventional clinical literature.

This encouraged me to go on and study the practices of emergency responders (for example, police officers, fire fighters, search and rescue, paramedics) and those engaged in relationships with animals of flight, especially

horses. The work of Monty Roberts, the well known 'horse whisperer' was a particular source of inspiration. (Roberts, M. 2002/2008)

It is with all of this in mind that I write the following:

Advice to Parents/grandparents/uncle and aunts/neighbours/school teachers/professional helpers on 'transfusing bravery' to those who have lost some of their bravery and now need a 'refill'(or 'recharge'):

Young people, under stressful or traumatic circumstances eg. home invasion, natural disaster, accident or threat to either life or well-being of him/herself or parents, can 'lose' their bravery almost overnight. In fact, at times such a 'loss' is so devastating and rapid that the young person and his/her parents can forget that such bravery has been 'lost'. And if the fears persist for very long, often young people and their parents every so often come to believe that they never had any bravery in the first place. Or they all might reach the conclusion that it was fake or underdeveloped bravery; otherwise how could it have disappeared virtually overnight. Why is that? I suspect it has to do with the fact that 'bravery' is something young people acquire bit by bit forexample, learning to sleep through the night despite the fears that have to be overcome to do so; or riding a bicycle despite the fears and reality of falling off until they learn how to secure your balance; or climbing a tree despite our species' preference for walking upright on the ground. Perhaps adults with a much long history of experiencing their bravery at times of stress or threat can recover it more readily. They have a great deal more to metaphorically fall back on. There is a long 'bravery' history that they can recall in order to 'recharge' their own temporary 'losses' of their bravery. For

young people, at such times of bravery 'loss', they are compelled to call upon their parents, older siblings, grandparents, friends, or teachers friends for safety and relief in the first instance.

I think too that regaining your bravery after having had it diminished by trauma and seismic events may be more akin to rehabilitating yourself after breaking your leg and having to convalesce for several weeks or months. And you have been medically advised that your broken leg should not bear any of your body weight and instead your crutches bear your body weight. I am pretty sure that no one, no matter how fit they were before their accident, has their plaster cast removed and goes back say to team sports or athletics without weeks or even months of rehab. Bravery rehab has a lot in common with the more generally understood physical rehabilitation. If you think about it, the person rehabbing uses physical aids to bear some of their weight and they see how much they can bear on their own. If you watch, the occupational therapist will encourage them to take risks but be ready and able to lend them a hand or a shoulder to lean on. But I suspect their greatest contribution is their encouragement, a sense that they express in their tone of voice and every part of their body that whatever the person needs to do to rehab is within their means. I suspect that tone of voice is the courage within their encouragement that they 'transfuse' in to those who seek to walk again.

Under such circumstances of bravery loss, it is the most natural thing in the world for parents/family friends to give emotional shelter and comfort to their young people. Anyone would hope that such shelter and comfort will provide temporary relief from the stressful or traumatic events the young person and family have undergone. Consider how sheep mob together when a young horse

threatens them in a paddock. It is well known that there is strength in numbers! Sometimes what was presumed to be a temporary measure, much like sheep mobbing together for example, having a young person sleep in bed with you or always having them in your company passes a point where everyone, including the young person, starts wondering if they have the Problem of Fear. The parents usually are the first to come to this conclusion and start worrying about the young person's fears. I wonder if the young person says to him/herself: "What are they so afraid of? And how can they tell me to be brave when they are so worried every time I look at them and they look at me?" One thing that is considered to be almost a law of fears is this: 'Fears spread like germs from one to another and at times, like an epidemic or bush fire". What else can happen is that the young person comes to believe s/he is now permanently inadequate to the tasks of living her/his life and feels required to turn to adults to be adequate for them. I guess this is like the wisdom about 'falling off horses' and the sooner you get back on one, the better.

However, in Christchurch, this has been very hard to do considering the first quake which everyone was assured was the last one and that all you had to do was wait out the aftershocks. And many were equally reassured that they would diminish as time went by. You just had to endure them. And then when Christchurch was hit by another quake- even larger and more dangerous and damaging, a young person might just want to give up on 'getting back on a horse'. They might have the idea it would be better to mob up for many months or years to come.

Transfusing Bravery and the ritual to enact it takes the circumstances of Christchurch and the quakes and aftershocks in to account. It accepts that anyone's

bravery, especially that of young people, can come and go and particularly in response to the relative unpredictability of seismic events. This is admittedly unnerving for anyone, not just young people. And that anyone could have more or less of it (bravery) on hand at any time, day or night. It would certainly be unwise to transfuse fear into a loved one in the well-intentioned but mistaken idea that your bravery is more or less fixed in you like the colour of your eyes or your height. The first assumption is that bravery comes and goes but with luck, at any time day or night, probably someone in your home, family or neighbourhood has more than they need at that time. And, in fact, often a young person's fears bring out the bravery in their parents. There are legendary stories of parents saving their children's lives by extraordinary means that under normal circumstances would have been virtually impossible or even believable- for example, a mother lifting the full weight of a car that was pinning her child beneath it.

If your family has come to the conclusion that as a family, whanau or neighbourhood, a time has come to pool its bravery, then you might like to consider the following steps to do so. As far as I know, bravery cannot be 'banked' like blood in coolers that can keep it refrigerated for weeks on end. That is where the similarity between blood and bravery transfusions breaks down.

Parents, hold a meeting with your children, their grandparents, uncles and aunts, neighbours, rugby coach, and anyone else whom you think might be willing to participate. Or just your family if you do not feel anyone else can join your bravery pool. Say something to this effect to everyone in attendance:

"Our city has been struck very hard by earthquakes and

aftershocks. Almost everyone was taken by surprise by these events as no one had predicted earthquakes here. In fact, in our recorded history, these are the first earthquakes. What was worse that when we were reassured the worst was over, we were hit even harder, this time causing far more damage and taking many lives. Before this, we all walked around our wonderful city feeling that the ground was secure beneath our feet, beneath our buildings and churches and beneath our homes. Many of us have temporarily lost our security and the aftershocks continually remind us of this. When we call upon our bravery, we say we 'are taking a stand', do we not? Not surprisingly, many of us have lost our convictions that we are safe on the ground we either stand or sleep on which we never used to question before the quakes. We all know they will come back to us in time but until then, many of us are finding that our bravery, which we used to be able to count on a pretty good supply of it- in fact, perhaps more than we needed to go about our lives, has been depleted. If this goes for adults our age, whom have known our bravery for 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, we expect we will have more bravery memories to recall in order to 'get back on our horses' and find our way back to living our life again than our young people. We expect it might be more difficult for kids to 'get back on their horses', given their bravery was in many cases half-baked or in a manner of speaking, under construction. But even for us, we know that our bravery can come and go.

For all of these reasons, we are going to put our family and neighbourhood bravery in to a pool and anyone who needs a 'recharge' or a 'refill' can go to someone and draw upon this pool of bravery. All you have to do- if you feel short of enough bravery to do something you want to do that you used to do before the quakes and aftershocks took some of your bravery away from you- is to turn to

someone else and say: 'Dad/mum/granddad/grandma, etc, do you have more than enough of your bravery to give me a bravery transfusion so I can sleep in my own bed tonight? On the other hand if we know we have more bravery than we need and it looks to us that you need a top up so you can go outside and play like you used to, we will ask you a question: 'Do you want a bravery transfusion so you can go outside and play like you used to?' Now, it may be that we have to admit that at this very moment, we are in short supply ourselves and can't give any away. But if we do, we assure you we will call someone else to assist you. You might just have to wait a few moments. However, it would be very silly of us to transfuse our 'lost bravery' in to you as that would do you no good whatsoever. In fact, it could even deplete your bravery further.

So let's try this out now.”

See below for instructions on how to give a bravery transfusion.

1) First of all, seek the young person's permission to give them a bravery transfusion. Say something like the following: "Tanya, looks like your bravery is in short supply right now! Would you like me to give you a transfusion of my bravery to recharge your bravery?"

2) Tell your son or daughter: "Can you allow me a few seconds to prepare my transfusion for you?" When you receive their consent to proceed, close your eyes, slow your breathing down to as slow as you can make it go. If you have had any yoga or martial arts training, you can use their routine of inhaling a deep breath in to the pit of

your stomach and then exhaling it as slowly as you can. Let the air dribble out of your closed lips so you can barely hear it. When you feel relaxed, recall as vividly as you can an incident in your past where you overcame some fearful obstacle/person/situation, remembering in particular your elation, joy or deep satisfaction at having done so.

Here are three stories to assist you remembering yours.

i) As an eleven year old, Perry went to a girl's camp which to her dismay involved climbing down a cliff face with safety ropes. At a point, she recalls being paralyzed with fear. She was terrified to allow herself to descend any further but was equally frightened to try to return to the top of the cliff. She recalled how an instructor looked up at her from beneath her and patiently talked to her in the most encouraging tone. It was almost as if she could hear reassurance in her voice, so much so that her bravery was almost instantaneously renewed. And before she knew it, she had climbed down to the bottom of the cliff face. Her instructor hugged her and told her that she was really brave. Perry was so elated and joyful that she went on to have the best camp ever. She had worried beforehand about sleeping over but she had such fun before bedtime with her new friends that she didn't even give that a thought.

ii) Mary learned that the Head of Department in English at the school at which she taught was retiring. She also had known for sometime that that was what she aspired to be. However, for many months before the vacancy arose, she festered over the fact that she knew this would require her occasionally to take the assembly. There was nothing she hated more than speaking in public but even moreso to a packed assembly of 600 teenagers. She was finding it hard to sleep at night until she decided to talk to

the Principal about her application and what was holding her back from submitting it. When the Principal heard about this stumbling block, she looked at her and smiled: "I am going to be sick tomorrow. How about you taking the assembly for me?" Mary said yes before she realized what she had done. The Principal smiled: "Good luck tomorrow! And please submit your application for the HOD position!" Mary hardly slept a wink preparing all the notices she was given and how to introduce that day's speaker. Her first bravery memory was how when she got up on the stage, instead of her legs turning to jelly, she found herself in full possession and realized she actually enjoyed standing before the assembled students. The Principal was waiting for her in the hallway and said to her: "You know the first time is always the hardest; each time after that it gets easier!"

iii) When I was 7, I was innocently swimming in the sea for the first time when I was caught by surprise by a rogue wave which dumped me and for a few seconds I feared for my life. Luckily my older sister was nearby and was a very able swimmer and she brought me to the beach sputtering. From then on, I feared any water over my head and did everything I could to get out of swimming events in any pool that was deeper than my height. When everyone went to the lake, I would find excuses to not go in the water even though I realized I was missing out on a lot of fun and my friends would tease me for not joining them. When I was 13 and very lonely one summer watching my friends frolicking in the river that ran through our city, I clearly recall just passing beyond my fear and dived in and knowing full well that I would soon pass the point at which I would no longer be able to touch the bottom of the riverbed. I soon realized I as a competent swimmer and found myself joining my friends. I can recall

their surprise seeing me alongside them sharing their laughter and splashing.

3) When you fully are aware that you have summoned up these feelings in your body, say to your son/daughter:

"Prepare yourself to receive a transfusion of my bravery in to you. There is nothing that makes a mother/father/grandfather/grandmother happier and fulfilled than doing what I am about to do for you! Now, please close your eyes and let me take your hand in mine." Package your words in mother/father/grandparent-love for a young person.

4) Take his/her hand tenderly in to yours. Rub the back of their hand lightly as if you were polishing a diamond of inestimable value that you were concerned you might scratch. People have described this grip as 'soft as a down feather duvet'; then very gradually and slowly tighten your grip as you consciously start telling yourself-but not out loud- the story of overcoming some Fear of yours from your past. Allow your grip to tell you son/daughter your story, but not in words but rather in touch. You might say you are translating your bravery story through bodily feelings.

5) After you have reached the climax of your translated story and you are confident that bravery is, in a manner of speaking, 'running' in to him/her, ask: "Can you feel my bravery running in to your hand?"

6) When s/he replies 'Yes', now ask: "Is my bravery warm or cold?" Undoubtedly s/he will answer: "It's warm!"

7) Inquire again: "Has my bravery reached your elbow yet?" You might touch his/her elbow with your free hand

to indicate where exactly the point on the body you are referring to is. Allow some time to elapse: "Has it reached your heart yet?" And once again indicate with your free hand where exactly the point on the body you are referring to is. Again allow some time to elapse: "It's going down hill now so it won't take too long to reach your toes!" and pinch their big toe on their right foot.

8) Not too much later and anticipating a satisfied customer, ask: "When you feel your bravery is topped up(or recharged or refilled), let me know!"

9) When s/he indicates that a sufficient amount of bravery has been transfused in to them to do what they want to do but the Fear is frightening them from doing, tell her/him: "In that case, open your eyes now!" but precede him/her and wait for them to do so with a prideful smile that indicates that it's wonderful for two people- a mother and a son- to share something like bravery". Or if you wish, you can even say this out loud.

10) After you withdraw your hand slowly but surely, say:

"Any time you need another bravery transfusion, just ask me! Okay? And if I need one, can I ask you for one? I know I would really appreciate you doing that for me if I need it. And you know that bravery can come and go after earthquakes and aftershocks".

11) Don't leave it too long before you sense that your son or daughter is bravery-full and perhaps doing some things s/he hadn't been able to do for some time. Even if you are not entirely truthful, you might consider saying something like this: "My bravery is a bit down. I probably could get along without a transfusion but it sure would make it easier for me to drive over the city to Auntie Jilly's if you could

give me a bravery transfusion. Do you think you are up to lending some of your bravery to your mum?"

If they happily agree to assist you, you will then have to instruct them the same way you instructed yourself by going over the above from 1-10. If nothing else, it allows your child to 'repay' any bravery debt they may feel they owe you; and secondly, it may be the most bravery-inducing experience your child has ever had having the sensation of transfusing their bravery in to a loved parent and you, in return, acknowledging them for their bravery, a bravery they would have had to consciously 'know' to transfuse it in the first place.

12) This could also be used between partners, friends or neighbours. What is so important is to consider that bravery can be pooled and shared around as needs require. This means that Fear cannot isolate you or your children from the alternative sources of bravery in their family, neighbourhood or community.

(3) Earthquake Kata

Ann and I had returned to our hotel after our first day wandering around San Francisco as tourists. It was Oct. 17th, 1989. I was hot and tired and decided to have a bath before going out for dinner that evening. We had been watching the Public Broadcasting System on TV. When I went in to the bathroom, I decided against turning it off when I realized I found the speaker, the Fire Chief of Los Angeles, so fascinating that I decided to bear with his topic- 'what to do if there was an earthquake'- which at the

time I believed had no relevance whatsoever for me. Of the many matters he discussed, one really stuck out in my mind. He spoke of what to do immediately upon becoming aware there was an earthquake. He recommended that you go immediately and stand in a doorway and either by yourself and with someone else, hug and shout at the earthquake 'Stop!' until of course it stops within a minute or so. Twenty minutes later, we heard the ominous rumbling and roar and immediately realized it was an earthquake. We followed his advice and shouted our heads off and the earthquake duly stopped according to our instructions.

Since learning of the earthquakes in Christchurch, I have been reminded of those memories of mine some 20 years ago. And I recall how uncanny I found it to be provided with the means of responding to an earthquake only a matter of minutes before it struck. And how fortunate I felt we were!

Ever since then, I have taken an interest in how seemingly fearless both Ann and I were under the imminent threat to our lives. Here we were on the sixth floor of a 1920s hotel building near the centre of the city. I compared this 'shouting at the earthquake' to the gathering of 'chi'(power) by martial artists and the 'shouting' that is entailed in most expressions of force delivered to an opponent or defending against such force. I took this up with two sensei (Isedora Lewis and Josh Phillips during a Masters paper (Reflecting on Your Practice) I co-teach with Ksenija Napan in the Dept.of Social Practice at UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland. In conversation, Josh told me of and demonstrated the 'pushing hands kata' in its most elementary form. I wondered if this might be effective in the same way the advice I had received had been so effective for us.

I asked my friend and sensei, Walter Bera (2) if he might demonstrate this kata for the purpose of rehearsing for and responding to aftershocks. He generously agreed to do so. You can watch a demonstration at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB0LNH5Nd U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB0LNH5NdU).

Karate for families and schools to defend yourself against Aftershocks:

Rehearsing for and Responding to Aftershocks

1) Rehearsals: Rehearsals might best be conducted on a regular basis so everyone feels comfortable about their response to aftershocks when they come. No doubt, the proficiency of an All Black (3) set play has a lot to do with continual rehearsal in practice before the day of a Test match. You might say that a young person or adult is putting the response up their sleeve so that it is readily available when it is required and you have very little time to think about it. Perhaps the rehearsals themselves are as significant as the response to the aftershock itself as it will have 'diminished' its psychological and emotional force by repetitions in which a young person anticipates their response to the 'threat' by a counter-attack.

2) It might considered worthwhile for families to prepare a bandanna (see any Karate Kid movie) perhaps in Crusader colours. (4) A respected elder eg grandparent, uncle, aunt or neighbour might be invited to invest the young person with 'the lore' of karate. This might best be done in a very ceremonial manner.

"John/Jane, you are only eight years old, a time when most people your age are carefree and the most they have to worry about is next week's footy match or be sure to get your home work done. But since Christchurch has been struck so hard twice by earthquakes, everyone's lives have been turned upside down. And we are all reminded of this by the aftershocks which still come and no one can predict when. There are special kinds of bravery for such times and that is called 'earthquake karate'.

My grandson/niece/young neighbour, if you wish to become a trainee in 'earthquake karate', there is much to learn and it has to be practiced regularly. Why? Because aftershocks come without much warning and you will have to defend yourself by counter-attacking quickly. If you shake my hand by way of agreement, I will train your parents in 'earthquake karate'. And they will train you.”

When s/he enters in to such an agreement to engage wholeheartedly in 'earthquake karate' training, his/her parents will hand over to the elder the Crusader bandanna (which they should have kept under wraps until this very moment) who will bind it around the young person's forehead. And if they can, say loudly: "Earthquake karate!"

3) After every aftershock, everyone should respond by 'earthquake karate'. I suspect this will prove even more empowering than the good advice Ann and I received from the Los Angeles Chief of Police in 1989.

Summary

The above were prepared and circulated to colleagues and services in Christchurch and Canterbury to be used as they saw fit. It was the way I saw to convert what had transpired between the many young people, their families

and myself since I started as a family therapist in 1976. I sent these documents to Christchurch with love.

Notes

- (1) This was undertaken as well as 'The Earthquake Kata' with the class of 'Reflecting on Your Practice', a paper I taught with Ksenija Napan towards the Masters of Social Practice at UNITEC Institute of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. I acknowledge and thank the following for their participation in thinking up (2) and (3): Alexandra Harris, Asoka Gamage-Mendis, Danielle Bisognu, Izzy Lewis, Magdalena Krejcova, Mary Mario, Perry King, Steve Taylor, Tom Didovich, Trish Dempsey and Wilma Cupido.
- (2) Walter Bera is a well known Narrative Therapist and Director of the Kenwood Centre in Minneapolis, Minnesota. See <http://www.kenwoodcenter.org>.
- (3) The All Blacks are the national team representing New Zealand in rugby. The World Cup which New Zealand is expected to win will take place in Sept/October of 2011.

- (4) The Crusaders are a legendary rugby team that represents Christchurch and Canterbury. Their colours are red and black.

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