



RESPONSIBILITY: THE GREAT FREEDOM

Terry Cooper

As a clinician I am responsible for knowing, through dialogue, how my clients are and what they are dealing with. I am responsible for asking the right questions to satisfy myself that I do know. I am responsible for knowing I don't know and doing something about not knowing. I am responsible for communicating and keeping in regular contact with my clients so that they are in contact and dialogue with themselves and me about how they are. I am responsible for satisfying myself that I feel responsible and informed. I am responsible for asking my clients if their contact with me is useful. If I doubt this, I am responsible for discussing this with my client and examining whether the relationship or what I have to offer is still of value. If I feel the relationship is stuck or in difficulty I am responsible for raising this with the client. If I am unhappy with the way I have been treated by the client it is up to me to raise it. I do this by talking to my client in person and face to face. I model strength, grace and respect.

I am responsible for educating my client, for teaching them how to be an adult and how to be responsible. I do this by example. I model healthy adult behaviour. I show my clients by example, how to be human, how to talk to others and how to deal with difficult conversations. I want them to have every opportunity to be and feel as responsible as I am and as I feel myself to be. It is a great feeling.

Being responsible is caring. Caring is an attitude of being responsible, of making effort. We do not have control over others and are not responsible for what they do, but by conducting ourselves in a responsible way we create the best possible circumstances for people to want to be influenced by us and the work we do.

I am responsible for making sure I am able to be present during my contact with clients and not short change them in terms of my ability to be present. I am responsible for managing my life in such a way that I can experience myself being consistent with what I am attempting to achieve in my work with others. This means taking care of myself physically, pacing myself, staying well and attending to my emotional and social needs. I do not look to my clients to satisfy my emotional needs. This does not mean that I am not touched or affected by my work with people. All of these things I do, I do first for me. I do them because I like behaving this way and because it is good for me to behave this way. When I behave this way I'm clear about who I am and this helps me to be clear about who others are. Being in charge of myself and managing myself in a way that I like and which satisfies me is a great freedom.

My first commitment is to myself: to form myself, to be with myself. From this place I can make informed decisions and can be in the world in a way in which I can live satisfied with myself and others. Being responsible is not a burden; it is part of being a whole person.

These are the behaviours and values I strive to maintain. Sometimes I realise I'm not succeeding and I need to reform myself. It is this attitude of reforming myself that is important, not the moments of losing my form.

Responsibility: the great freedom.

©Terry Cooper 2006