

# CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  July / August 2006

## MANifest ~ Offering Hope in a Changing World

“Men have not been given the permission or the skills to pass on who they are to their children. We often know what makes fathers angry, but not the deep desires and dreams of their hearts, much less their loneliness and hurt.”<sup>1</sup> Challenging words from Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, founder of the Men As Learners and Elders (M.A.L.Es.) program, and prolific writer about men, masculinity, and male spirituality. Men learning to find the truth of themselves – ourselves – and speaking that truth from within is what truly touches and impacts our children and gives hope in a changing world.

Seven years ago we inaugurated MANifest, a program for men exploring their masculinity. In our workshops and retreats, we spend considerable energy on the question, “Why do men seem to be so restrained or limited in their range of emotional response?”

### **Nurture**

Part of the answer to this question lies in examining what the culture values. Boys have traditionally been socialized in groups that are competitive by nature, in which a hierarchy or a “pecking order” emerges. They are encouraged to be aggressive and are affirmed for being successful in this pursuit. Communication for males becomes a matter of task focus and how to win. Boys learn early to “cut off” from sensitive feelings and to identify constrained emotional response as strength. This early learning is reinforced throughout life, e.g., business decisions should not be clouded by personal feelings, soldiers must not be distracted from their focus in battle by their feelings regarding the brutality of their engagement.

Most men can clearly identify and remember a variety of experiences or events when they or others were hazed as boys or young men – pushed and taunted to prove their toughness and their emotional constraint, silently bearing or ignoring the pain of the moment... or carrying the humiliation if they didn’t. “Don’t be a sissy” and “big boys don’t cry” are examples of the demeaning messages used in the hazing – and rearing – of boys.

Certainly bravery, endurance, and fortitude are of great value. Such values are in fact necessary to the development of good character when learned with compassion and balance. However, to learn these values in a way that demeans and desecrates one’s feelings and intuition is destructive both to self and others.

### **Nature**

Another part of the answer lies in the neurophysiology of the brain. Men’s nervous systems differ from those of women in many

ways, most obviously at the cortical level. The general tendency for a man to become singularly engrossed in a task with exclusion to all else around him seems to be at least in part a function of left-brain dominance in men. Male left-brain dominance is believed to be enabled by limited access to his right-brain functioning. This

is due to the fact that the corpus collosum, the nerve bundle that bridges the two hemispheres of the brain allowing the exchange of information, is much thinner in the male brain than it is in women. A comedian was once heard to say that the exchange for men travels a dirt path while for women it travels a six-lane highway. The fact that men are “wired” differently from women is helpful in understanding and appreciating the delay that men often experience in attempting to access their feelings.

### **Yin and Yang**

Chinese medicine speaks of the Yin and the Yang energies. Some biblical commentators feel the creation story of Genesis suggests that human beings were made in God’s Image, both male and female. Psychological theorists have put forth the idea that as human beings, each of us is a combination of masculine and feminine energies. To exist and function as whole human beings, men and women need to explore and integrate both sides of their natures and to have access to both of these energies.

Men, as well as women, have an inherent capacity for emotional awareness and connection. Men are capable of exploring and integrating their inner feelings without sacrificing their ability to act strongly in their outer world. In fact, they will act more prudently and responsibly when they have access to their inner world.

Sadly, it too often takes extreme circumstances, such as loss of family or the threat of the loss of family, to motivate men to look inside.

### **MANifest**

Our experience with men in MANifest workshop settings would suggest that at least some men hunger for the opportunity to open up and begin to explore the inner workings and terrain of their masculinity. They begin to claim their feeling side as they look at redefining and

understanding themselves as whole human beings.

When adult males begin such an exploration, they often require the support of a mentor or a group of men who are likewise committed to this quest for wholeness and are perhaps further along. Such exploration also requires an environment that insures safety from hazing and shaming, and is free of judgment or being preached to.

### **Initiation**

*I see men walking wounded:  
hairy men, muscular men,  
fathers, lovers full of sex,*

*but dripping with blood,  
scarlet sons of pain  
cut by grief,  
drawn and quartered by failure,  
stabbed with jagged fear.*

*Some wise, bearded father,  
some elder with a masculine embrace  
has touched them with his own  
red-stained hand,  
blessed them with crucified words,  
sent them where they did not wish to go,  
smeared them with divine musky oil,  
named them beloved sons.*

*They have given up mountain climbing.  
They have come down from the great bluff.  
They have descended the shadowed canyon  
by a knotted rope.  
When they reach the end,  
dangling over mysterious, unknown ground,  
they let their grip slip  
and land on soft snow  
in the middle of summer.*

*These men are my brothers.  
I thought I had none.  
I thought I had suffered the  
male anguish alone.*

*But see:  
We are wounded together,  
broken in just the right places,  
a company of bleeders,  
each of us marked for death,  
and we are still walking.*

*by Michael Coffey  
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What is to be gained by men opening up to their real feelings? Why would we let ourselves be seen fully and invite the kind of vulnerability that we have learned to protect ourselves against throughout our lives?

Richard Rohr points out that the man who does not go on the inward journey and thus does not awaken his feeling side "... will move toward the outer superficial world and his head will be his control tower. He will build, explain, use, fix, manipulate, legislate, order and play with whatever he bothers to touch, but will not really touch it at all. For he does not know the inside of things... [such men] have not gone inside, they have not learned trust, vulnerability, prayer or poetry. They, and the civilization we have inherited from them, are in great part unwhole or even sick."<sup>2</sup>

We at the Center and in MANifest believe there is benefit in the journey itself. To journey inside is to journey to be fully ourselves and to claim our wholeness, which for men is to reach our deeper masculinity. Our personal gain is to have the full spectrum of our emotions available to us. This empowers our lives and enriches our personal legacy, giving hope in a changing world.

Lowell L. Houts, D.Min.

Licensed mental health counselor and pastoral counselor.  
Lowell holds a doctoral degree in pastoral counseling from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

J. Michael Sears, Ed.D.

Sexologist and Relationship Counselor  
Mike received his doctoral degree in human sexuality from The Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality.

Lowell and Mike share a special interest in men's issues.  
Together they have developed **MANifest**, a program for men built around weekend retreats and Saturday workshops.

<sup>1</sup> Schulte, Anthony J. "Naming the 'Father Hunger' An Interview with Richard Rohr." *St. Anthony Messenger Press*. October 1990.  
Available at: [http://www.malespirituality.org/father\\_hunger.htm](http://www.malespirituality.org/father_hunger.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Rohr, Richard. "Masculine Spirituality." *Praying – Spirituality for Everyday Living*. National Catholic Reporter, Sep-Oct 1988.  
Available at: [http://www.malespirituality.org/masculine\\_spirituality.htm](http://www.malespirituality.org/masculine_spirituality.htm).

#### Suggested Reading

Gurian, Michael. *The Wonder of Boys*. NY: Putnam, 1996.

Kindlon, Dan and Michael Thompson. *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. NY: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999.

Pollack, William. *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*. NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1998.

Rohr, Richard. *From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on Male Spirituality*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005.

## C.O.O.L. Corner

Children Overcoming the Obstacles of Life

### How to encourage emotional expression in children

- » Encourage emotional expression in children by verbally reflecting their actions and feelings.
- » Take time to play in your child's world, allowing your child to make the rules. Your job is to be a mirror for your child during this special playtime - not to teach, remind, guide, or discipline.
- » Use words such as, "You are feeling mighty proud of yourself," or "You are feeling frustrated with that toy," as well as, "You are crashing those cars!" Express the same emotion/excitement in your voice as the child is showing in the action.
- » Saying it this way is a deeper level of validation of your child and your child's emotion than is conveyed through "I" statements such as, "I am proud of you."
- » The reflective-type comments that we are suggesting say, "It is YOUR feeling. YOU are expressing what is going on inside of YOU, what you are feeling. You know you best."

### MANifest is a program for men, facilitated by male counselors, built around weekend retreats and Saturday workshops.

MANifest is for men of all ages and from every walk of life.

Lowell Houts, D.Min., and Mike Sears, Ed.D., facilitate all MANifest programs.

**MANifest:**  
A Gathering of Men

#### MANifest weekend Friday – Sunday, October 6 – 8, 2006

Fee: \$175 (\$150 if pre-registered before September 22, 2006), includes lodging and five meals  
MANifest weekends are held at a retreat center southeast of Winterset.

The weekend gives men an extended opportunity to take a look inside themselves and to bridge the emotional disconnect that so often happens in the traditional rearing of most men in this society. The weekend is a time to get past the "no fear," "no sadness," "emphasize toughness," "reinforce anger" messages and values so many men carry around with them. The emotional lives of men need to be explored, acknowledged, and celebrated by men, individually and collectively. Please call the Center to pre-register (515) 274-4006.

#### MANifest calendar:

**Men and Their Fathers**  
**Men and Sex**

**Saturday, November 11, 2006**  
**Saturday, January 13, 2007**

**9:00am – 3:00pm**  
**9:00am – 3:00pm**

**\$50**  
**\$50**

Please check the Center's website for more information, [www.dmpcc.org/support/support.html](http://www.dmpcc.org/support/support.html).

# Object Relations Theory in Clinical Practice – A 10-week Course



**J. Jeffrey Means, Ph.D.**

**Dates:** October 6 – December 15, 2006  
**Time:** Fridays, 8:15 – 9:45 a.m.  
**Location:** Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  
**Cost:** \$200  
**Registration Deadline:** September 15, 2006  
**Instructor:** J. Jeffrey Means, Ph.D.

Object relations theory provides a bridge between individual psychodynamic and systemic ways of understanding the problems people bring to psychotherapists. This makes it a valuable tool for adding depth and breadth to an understanding of personality development and the complexity of human interactions in couples, families, and larger organizations.

This seminar will explore personality development from an object relations perspective with emphasis given to utilizing this theory in clinical practice. Class presentations, reading assignments, and examples of case material provided by the instructor and class members will provide the material for discussion. For more information or to register call (515) 274-4006

J. Jeffrey Means, Ph.D., is director of professional education at Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center and Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Behavioral Medicine at Des Moines University. He is a licensed clinical psychologist, pastoral counselor, and marriage and family therapist. In addition to his clinical practice at the Center, Dr. Means has interests in teaching, writing, supervision, professional formation, and clinical case consultation. He is the author of *Trauma & Evil: Healing the Wounded Soul* published by Fortress Press.

## Pastoral Care Specialist Program – 2006-07

The Ministry Resource Center of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center will again offer this two-year program of professional development and renewal. The Pastoral Care Specialist Program is designed for pastors, chaplains, and lay persons involved in ministries of pastoral care. Participants meet monthly to learn about areas critical to effective pastoral care, and to receive support, encouragement, and consultation on their work. Participants can solidify what they already do well and integrate new knowledge and skills into their ministries. Seminar topics vary each year.

The program begins the second Tuesday of September (September 12, 2006) and runs through the second Tuesday of June (June 12, 2007). Participants meet from 8:45 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Tuition for the program is \$500 for each of the two years. The deadline for registrations is September 1, 2006, and registration is limited.

This program is designed to meet some of the requirements for certification by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors as a Pastoral Care Specialist. Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary also offers academic credit for participation in the program for those enrolled in its Doctor of Ministry Program in Theology and Leadership.

For additional information, contact J. Jeffrey Means, Ph.D., Director of Professional Education, at (515) 274-4006, or check the Center's website, [www.dmpcc.org/classes/classes.html](http://www.dmpcc.org/classes/classes.html).

## Pastoral Care Specialist Graduates – Spring 2006



Successfully completing the two-year Pastoral Care Specialist Program in June 2006 were:

- **Mary Ferring**, Parish Nurse, Windsor Heights Lutheran Church
- **Dave Huhn**, Chaplain, Mercy Pastoral Care
- **Ann Mertes**, Director of Adult Faith Formation and R.C.I.A., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
- **Thea Nicholas**, spiritual director and gardener of soils and souls

### Testimonials of program participants:

\**"The Pastoral Care Specialist Program provides valuable insights into dimensions and nuances of ministry for the practitioner. The casual professional setting allows for candid discussion among peers and experts. The course's usefulness is evident for the novice as well as the seasoned veteran."*

\**"The Pastoral Care Specialist Program gives you a wider view of the struggle of God's people and provides guidance on how we can better help our brothers and sisters as they respond to life's fragility."*

\**"What I found most valuable about the program:*

- Presentations by specialists
- The opportunity to ask questions
- Suggested reading lists
- Writing my reflections
- Feedback on reflections"

# Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center FOUNDATION

The Center is committed to enhancing the emotional, spiritual, and relationship health of individuals and families through the provision of counseling and educational services. In order to accomplish our mission, the Center must build a financial foundation that can fund both present and future counseling services for the citizens of Iowa. There are a number of ways that each of us could help:

- We can amend our wills or trusts to contribute a portion of our estate to the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center (DMPCC) Foundation.
- If a loved one dies, we can identify the DMPCC Foundation as one of the designated memorials.
- If a friend or loved one dies, and the designated memorials don't include the DMPCC Foundation, it is acceptable to make a memorial donation to another charitable cause such as the DMPCC Foundation. The grieving families would receive acknowledgement from the Center.
- Finally, the DMPCC Foundation is always happy to accept tax-deductible contributions at any time.

There is hope and healing at the Center today and, with your help, there will be hope and healing for years to come. Please contact the Center for information on contributing now and/or planning a gift for the future (515) 274-4006.

## New Staff at the Center Curtis Rich, M.S.W.



We are very pleased to be welcoming Curtis Rich, M.S.W., to the Center staff. Curt is a licensed clinical social worker. He received his B.A. in Sociology from Central College, Pella, IA, and his M.S.W. from the University of Iowa. Curt has worked in inpatient, outpatient, and residential settings. His clinical interests include issues related to personality disorders, unresolved grief, and attachment concerns. He is a Diplomate in the American Psychotherapy Association. Curt is already seeing adult clients at the Center's Woodland Avenue office.

## CONNECTING

is a publication of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, an independent, interfaith, not-for-profit organization. For nearly 35 years, the Center has been providing counseling and educational services to adults, families, adolescents, and children for the purpose of enhancing emotional, spiritual, and relationship health. The Center has satellite offices in Ankeny, Lamoni, Lenox, Leon, Mt. Ayr and Osceola.  
Editor: Kathleen Murrin

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