Developing Peace
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Ellis (1992) suggested that cognitive therapy can be applied to help individuals with disfunctional behaviours and their families and friends to develop peace in themselves and towards each other and eventually extended to ethnic, religious, political and cultural groups that are different from their own. As recommended by community psychologists, second order change can be attained through people who present themselves to therapy. As a clinical community psychologist, I have this belief structured in Bronfrenbrenner's (2000) ecological model that every individual is nested in a system and to be successful with treatment in therapy, I must examine all the systems and assist my client with managing the systems effectively. For example, if I find that the reason why my client tends to engage in fighting behaviour is because the parents often fight at home, I will invite the parents and help them to resolve their challenges so that they can provide better learning and development environment for my client. My hope is that when the parents develop healthier relationship, the child, my client will become better and socialize appropriately in at school, home and other places.

Individuals, families, groups, and governments can choose to use peaceful methods of interaction and negotiation or combative methods in settling their conflicts. They can centre their mind on vulnerability, defensiveness, resentment and hostility, or they can develop empathy and hope for the future. Or they can learn to surmount depression, despair, and unyielding and absolutist thinking. People who undertake the Rational-Emotive-Behavioural Therapy (REBT) proposed by Ellis (1992) can achieve the goal of overcoming disfunctional thoughts and belief. This type of therapy focuses on helping individuals to acquire a rational mindset that facilitates modification of their schemas for thoughts, emotion and action. Ellis expressed that persons who succeed in changing their mental sets can extend what they have learned in therapy to varied contexts (2008).

From Albert Bandura's position on the impact of selective moral disengagement in which he attempted to explain why some people regardless of their personal ethical system and values can be led into committing, tolerating and ganging up with morally culpable attitudes that advance violence (1986, 2002), I attempt to make sense of the crisis that has engulfed the Jos region of the nation. I have tried on several occasions to understand why Christians in the area are fighting back in manners that are not consistent with the teachings of Christ. A few days ago, I called a priest from Jos to tell him that I am planning to hold a youth peace conference in the area. The priest told me the state is very unstable and that both Christians and Muslims are reacting in diabolical ways. Similarly, I have often tried to make sense of the reprehensible attitudes and behaviours that we are barraged with on a daily basis particularly the level of corruption in our work places and schools despite the fact that most of us profess a religion that abhors such wrong doings. To shun violence and endow peace we all must watch out for the following mechanisms of selective moral disengagement:

- Moral justification - justifying hurt meted out to others for supposed higher goals such as using force or injuring anyone who challenges or offends your family.
- Euphemistic labeling - using labels that are less cognitively loaded to "clean" violent and unlawful actions done against others. An example is using the term ethnic or religious cleansing instead of massacre to describe the killing of an ethnic or religious group.
- Advantageous comparison - reappraising and minimizing reprehensible behaviours by comparing with worst actions for instance accepting a bribe of ₦500,000.00 because compared to ₦1,000,000,000.00 stolen by other people, it is a token.

- ❀ Displacement of responsibility - placing the responsibility for unruly behaviour on persons of higher authority. For example placing responsibility for the violent behaviours of children on the lack of proper training at home.
- ❀ Diffusion of responsibility - using statements such as "everyone is doing it" to support corrupt behaviours.
- ❀ Distorting consequences - teaching people to believe that the costs of their illegal or hurtful behaviour are less grave than the truly are e.g., the reduction of the consequences for child sexual abuse in cultures that claim it as a normal practice.
- ❀ Dehumanizing of victims - perceiving certain victims of inhumane actions as less than humans and deserving of such treatments.
- ❀ Attributing blame to the victim - just like dehumanization above, a person sees victims of oppression, aggression and other violent crimes as provoking the treatment received. For example blaming house maids who are physically, verbally or sexually abused by their masters or madams.

(Aquilar, 2011)

All these forms of selective moral disengagement are dangerous and can create instability, crisis, conflict and violence of varied degrees if individuals fail to explore different perspectives when making decisions about the course of actions they want to take in achieving their life goals. In addition, we must watch the influence of power or authority in our lives. Philip Zimbardo (2007) through his experiment on authority demonstrated that power can make good people to turn evil in certain contexts and systems. We need to learn how to resist bad authoritative people when they are pushing us to do evil actions. Think about cultism, robbery, kidnapping and other gang-related behaviours - they are primarily engineered by one leader who exhibits and encourages evil acts. The gangs promise false safety, power, money and security. Think about some of the most heinous wars and dehumanization of people such as the killing of the Jewish people by a Hitler-led army. One bad authority can set the stage for conflict and violence at different levels; in families, communities, within the school and between towns, states and nations. We must learn how to distinguish good from bad authorities and shun all forms of coercion to do evil. We must also give priority to freedom and the retention of responsibility for our actions.

Conclusion

The institution of peace in our individual lives, families, communities, schools, towns, religion, states and nation calls for education on the contributing factors that inhibit peace and breed violence, and those that facilitates peace. We must be aware of our psychological tendencies and how to curb or control our behaviour regardless of our emotion at any given time or circumstance. We need to actively deconstruct hurtful habits or behaviours we have learned from experiences and the cognitive schemas that set us up for violent actions. Just as we learn faulty attitudes, we can learn good ones. We have the opportunity to decide to focus on our vulnerabilities and retain disfunctional behaviours or make the necessary adjustment to surmount the negative experiences we have had in the past and enshrine peace in our lives. Cognitive and cognitive-behavioural psychologists can help people to find their pathway to peace. No case can be considered hopeless as long as there is still an opportunity to learn new behaviour. Psychologists and educational institutions should endeavour to make peace studies an academic and clinical practice priority to create more avenues for people to learn about and embrace peace.

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