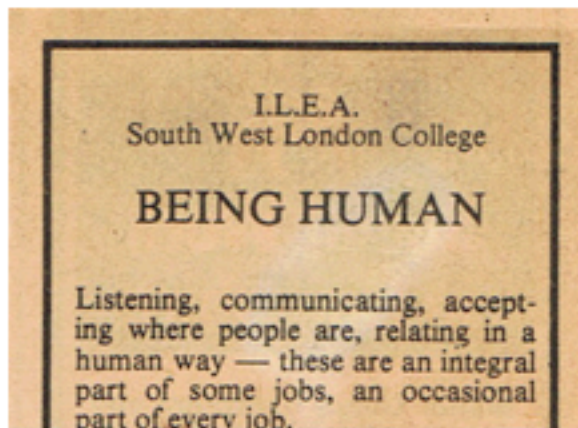


Being Human

This was the title of a 2-day workshop that Pat Milner and myself gave in those good old days in the 70s.

'Good Old Days'? I think many people thought of the 70s in that way. And still do now. Certainly we did at the Polytechnic of North London, where we ran that course for mature students - described in the fourth item down the Navigation Bar on the Home Page: History and Design of Courses. We wanted to change the world. And we did change that little bit of it in the Management Department of the Poly. And from the feedback we had, and from the developments in the lives of many of the participants, we did contribute to the changes that were promised by those heady days.

This is all I can find of what was obviously the start of a leaflet for this workshop. It was a two-day workshop run by Pat Milner and myself - way back in those days (chronicled in the Poly and S-W London College histories) under the auspices of the Counseling Skills courses.



It's a good title, isn't it? We ran it several times, under the auspices of the South-West-London College Counseling Skills course. It was not a course intended to teach or give practice in counseling skills, however. Our intention was to reach out to 'ordinary people', and to teach skills in how human beings could develop the basic skills in what is stated on leaflet - that is: listening, communicating, accepting where other people are and - using the words of the leaflet: 'relating in a human way'.

But then, what is 'human'?

Even in this short sentence in the leaflet it seems pretty clear what we were up to. What I want to draw attention to now is that these basic skills - in this excerpt referred to as relating to work - are of course an integral part of how we can relate in general. But we often don't!

So this article will be about the evolution of collaborative skills in the development of human beings. And about how we need to think about them, and start to think about how to take a constructive part in that development process.

The Evolution of the Human Species.

When I have looked up 'Human Evolution' on a search engine the most frequent result to come up first is physical structure: the body becoming upright, the hand becoming flexible, the skull becoming larger and the pelvis becoming larger to allow a larger brain-containing head to pass through.

After these physical features, the development of speech and of the depiction of images become important, and this is of course much more interesting. Because with these appear social interaction.

And this is what I am interested in. Behaviour. And language. And especially, of course, the way social interaction develops, and is expressed. The way it is expressed within groups who have common interests and purposes; and between groups who have differences and potential conflict, or actual conflict.