

should be run, most involve some form of power sharing and some doctors are reluctant to enter into this. However, the legal issues of responsibility, often cited to justify the doctor's need to be in control, do not appear to hold water. Given the possible benefits of multidisciplinary teams for our patients we must be prepared to give up some of our authority in order to facilitate a model of care which best meets the needs of our patients.

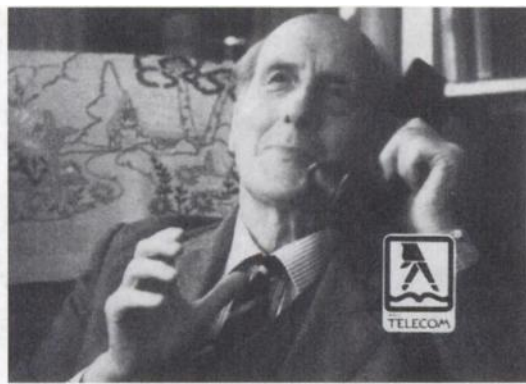
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'Fly Fishing' by J. R. Hartley: an introduction to psychotherapy

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The author J. R. Hartley and his book on fly fishing do not exist in external reality. They are instead a product of the advertising fantasy world, dreamt up to promote the Yellow Pages. This advertisement was at its prime when I was trying to develop a suit-

able analogy for teaching medical students and junior doctors about psychotherapy and some of its techniques. When taking a short break in front of the television set, it suddenly struck me just how appropriate this advertisement was. J. R. Hartley himself lends credence to the analogy, while fly fishing as a sport provides an excellent comparison for the art of psychotherapy. Like the fictitious publication in the advert, psychotherapy and its techniques can prove exasperatingly elusive, as they constitute a series of shared internal beliefs and representations which exist largely within the collective mind. I therefore felt that this ambiguous character who is not part of the external real world, yet has a special inner meaning for a wide number of people, seemed like the ideal analogy for describing psychotherapeutic processes.

When testing out this fishing/psychotherapy analogy on friends and colleagues, many automatically assumed that I was talking about coarse fishing. They seemed more accepting of a comparison which

involved a baited hook being thrown into the water while the fisherman waited patiently on the bank until the fish made its whereabouts known. The well established belief of an opaque and passive therapist prevailed, and they all appeared reluctant to accept an analogy to the more active nature of fly fishing. However, it is more passive activity that is most reflective of the similarity between fly fishing and the practice of psychotherapy.

Viewed from outside, both fly fishing and psychotherapy can be seen as isolated and idiosyncratic pursuits. They share a joint misrepresentation in that they are often seen as passive and undemanding activities. However, in reality, they can be extremely arduous and active. Both involve a diadic relationship, although like fish and fisherman, the therapist and patient play very different roles. Therefore, to succeed in these pursuits, the practitioner needs to have an intuitive understanding of "the other", be this a person or a fish. A good therapist remains active and alert throughout, open to all opportunities which may present themselves. As the fisherman uses the fly to lure the fish, so too do psychotherapists use their intuition, imagination and creativity to make repeated casts above the surface of the psyche, waiting to see what rises to the bait. Intuitive understanding and practical skills need to be combined with the ability to tolerate uncertainty, as both psychotherapist and fisherman often deal with half-seen and half-imagined visions which at times seem intensely real and at other times seem like no more than a reflection on the water.

Like fishing, psychotherapy needs to be carried out in a quiet and safe environment, an environment free from disturbance and in some way separate from external reality. Psychotherapists should choose their working environment with the same care and selectivity that characterises the committed fisherman. Having found a suitable and tranquil environment, the good fisherman/therapist carefully appraises the situation, bringing his intuition and understanding to bear before resorting to action. Quiet contemplation of the terrain is followed by careful selection of the most appropriate fishing fly. The subsequent, oft repeated casts, are then carefully planned and orchestrated; their direction, nature and frequency being dictated by intuition and understanding. Innate ability and training are combined in an active process which is both conscious and unconscious simultaneously. It is based on a clear understanding of both the mind of the fisherman and the mind of the fish. By contrast, the inept fisherman/therapist soon finds the waiting intolerable. He begins to cast around at random in different directions, without thinking the actions through beforehand. Little concern is demonstrated for what might be brought to the surface, and his ability to handle the consequences.

Both psychotherapy and fly fishing can therefore be seen as a one-to-one relationship, in which the practitioner tries to bring invisible objects that lie below the surface into the open. This is a long and difficult process, in which the fantasied images within the fisherman's/therapist's mind are converted into objective reality. This sequential process can therefore be described as first and foremost an understanding of the other, finding a suitable setting, choosing an appropriate lure, casting in the right direction, attracting the attention of and later hooking the fish, and then bringing it safely to shore. In addition to intuition and practical skill, the technique which lies at the very heart of this process is appropriate timing. Both psychotherapy and fishing can be conceptualised as activities in which knowing when to take action is more valuable than knowing what action to take.

Both processes thus begin with the lone practitioner viewing an opaque and unfathomable expanse. However, in their mind's eye, they are able to fantasise and imagine what might lie beneath the surface. Using the most suitable lure, the fisherman persistently casts and recasts in a given area until a fish rises to the bait. Similarly, the psychotherapist designates an area in which he will be working. Within this context, he uses the most suitable techniques to bring unconscious processes to the surface. Both the fisherman and the therapist may then encounter a vague shape moving towards the surface, and they must prepare themselves to strike. The timing of the strike is vital, as too early or too late a strike would result in the vague shadow returning to the depths untouched. If the strike is too aggressive, it may cause damage and force the wounded object back to even more unfathomable depths. Yet too gentle a touch may equally allow the object to evade capture.

Once the fish has been hooked, the most time consuming, repetitive and tiring part of the process takes place. This is the technique of playing the fish – allowing both give and take until it becomes tired and submissive, enabling it to be brought safely towards dry land. A similar process occurs within psychotherapy once certain issues have come to the fore. The therapist may bring a previously unconscious or unrecognised impulse to the surface through a mixture of intuition, technique and skill. However, having latched onto or caught hold of this concept, the therapist must now fight to hold on to it against the struggles of the patient to repress it yet again. This too requires an interplay of give and take, allowing the resistant concept to have space to run like the struggling fish. What follows is an ongoing, repetitive process in which the impulse/fish is allowed leeway to run before being reeled firmly back in again, then allowed to run again, and then yet again reeled slowly in. In this manner, the unconscious thoughts, like the

fish, become slowly less resistant and can be seen ever more clearly on the surface. Instead of a half perceived shape in unfathomable and frightening darkness, the impulse becomes increasingly more visible and comprehensible, and far less daunting.

Like the fisherman, the therapist must always ensure not to exceed the breaking strain of the line. The psychotherapist thus has to be extremely careful not to exceed the coping mechanisms of the patient, and latch into unconscious motivations that the patient is not yet ready to handle. This may overload the patient's capacity to deal with stress and lead to a sudden breakdown of the entire process. As with fishing, the skill therefore lies in landing the largest catch possible within the capacity of the line. In a similar manner, the psychotherapist tries to maximise the patient's potential without precipitating him into sudden breakdown.

Having safely landed their catch, both the psychotherapist and the fisherman may then view it with pride, weigh it, and finally return it to the water. The unconscious thoughts, like the fish, are returned to their original environment where they play a vital ecological role. Yet hopefully, both will be changed and modified, preferably wiser for the experience and able to avoid mistakes that have been made before. Like the fisherman, the therapist's role never truly ends as there are always uncharted waters that prove challenging. Good practitioners will look around yet again, actively and enthusiastically, to where intuition leads them. However, like the good fisherman, the good psychotherapist should know when to change his approach. People, like fish, are all very

different, and what appeals to one might not appeal to another. It is therefore important for the therapist to keep an open mind, and to be able to modify his approaches in keeping with the specific situation. As the fisherman modifies his fly, his casting technique, and where he aims – so should the good psychotherapist exhibit flexibility and innovative approaches. Above all, like a good fisherman, the good therapist should know when to quit.

For both fishing and psychotherapy to succeed, they need to be accompanied by a certain degree of fantasy. Before embarking on their endeavours, the practitioners must have some idea or image in their mind of what they may catch and what the end result may be. Perhaps for both, a creative and active imagination is therefore a vital prerequisite. Patience, persistence, durability and stability could also be seen as other joint prerequisites. Psychotherapy, like fishing, does not succeed all the time. Instead, it succeeds intermittently which probably spurs the practitioner on to repeated behaviour in the hope of more hard won successes in the future. As with fishing, the psychotherapy environment may at times be adverse, cold and hostile with rewards that are few and far between. Yet isolated catches under these conditions bring a sense of quiet pride to the practitioner.

Perhaps the most telling similarity between fly fishing and psychotherapy is that they both share what Keats called negative capability – that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts without an irritable reaching after fact and reason.