

# THE FAMILY PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE



## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2017

# Group Facilitators

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### FEATURE STORY

# Spotlight



## Patrina Farquharson

*Becoming a Family Group Facilitator*

I started to do lots of research about latent abuse and repressed memories. I started to practice meditation and deep breathing just to control the feelings of frustration and rage that rose very fast in me. I began to have dreams of someone screaming at me, someone much bigger than myself in size and female. I heard the words I used on my children being screamed at me in my dreams, and I started to write these vivid dreams down upon waking. I concentrated on them during my meditation and soon a face emerged. My beloved aunt who lived with us while I was a little girl, the aunt who told me I was her favourite niece, who bought me gifts and my favourite foods, was also the aunt who would scream at me for not making my bed right, or for playing with her make up, or for not being as neat and tidy as she required me to be. SCREAMING at me for the slightest of transgressions. I had suppressed these memories for the longest time, but the little girl who had been scared and traumatised by this abuse emerged as the abuser when I had children of my own..

THAT realization was so devastating that I was even more scared to tell anyone. I did however apologize to my eldest, who was 15 at the time, for

I knew something was wrong about 18 months after my eldest son was born. He scratched me inadvertently and I screamed so loud and viciously at him that I felt like I had left my body and was watching some other person yelling at my child. I saw his scared face and caught myself. I grabbed him and put him in his crib and went into my room. I calmed myself down and was so scared that I didn't tell anyone.

Over time I began to pick and nag at him more and more, always finding fault and pushing him to perfection which was never attainable. He never complained or talked back. My husband would gently tell me to give him a break when my rantings got too intense, so I would just stop and start up again later. I also pushed perfection on my husband, never ever being satisfied with his efforts and always looking for reasons to leave because of his failing to be enough for me. I continued to do this for many years, all the while knowing in the back of my head that I was somehow responsible for these failures, but being too ashamed of my actions to even admit that truth to myself.

After years trying to please me and persuading me to stay when I threatened to leave, my husband said to me, "Fine, Trina, if it'll make you happier to leave, then I won't argue with you anymore. Just let me know when and where and we can decide how best to separate." Now, I'd never thought past the point of threatening to leave as that usually was enough to elicit the response I wanted from him, which was extra affection and coddling to assuage me. Since I was the one who was not whole, none of that worked for very long and soon the cycle of dissatisfaction and need would start up again. But this time, my bluff had been called and I was faced with the very real fact of being alone with all of my false selves, each one uglier than the next.

I knew then that something had to change. I was still too ashamed and full of false pride to talk about this to my husband, let alone anyone else, but

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the abuse I had heaped on him and he said to me, "I am glad you realize it, Mummy, but just don't do it to the boys" meaning his younger brothers. It still took me a long time to curtail the screaming beast that came out of me at times. I learned to heed the warning signs and leave the room or just remain silent. I learned the triggers and then how to avoid them, but it was slow going. In September, 2015, I was introduced to the Family Facilitator classes by Deborah and Joy Sweeting. I attended my first session on September 12, and it was like light bulbs started firing off in my head. Finally in Dr. David Allen's Contemplative Discovery Pathway Theory, I had the vocabulary to identify all the things that were happening to me: instinctual needs, splitting, transference, the hurt trail, the need for love, empowerment and security, the evil violence tunnel. I felt like finally here, I could tell my story and not be more ashamed than I already was of myself.

After two years of Family Facilitator Training courses and co-facilitating in my own groups, I realise that the best and worse part of the process is me. The "best" involves progressing as a facilitator, and journeying lovingly towards the most authentic me. This of course includes both spontaneous and planned tackling of issues of shame and trauma in my own life that not only reveal WHY I behave a certain way but HOW I SHOULD behave. Sometimes these lessons are so liberating and blinding that it's all I want to talk about or dwell on, and herein lies the "worse" aspect because of course, the role of a facilitator is to encourage the group process in as selfless a way as possible, and the incessant clamour of the ego does nothing to help that. Since awareness is key and I now know that about myself, I have worked hard to ensure that I try my best to understand the

perspectives of others while facilitating and participating in the family groups. The detachment of viewing each participant with acceptance and love, enables me to create a feeling of safety and calm in myself and in the group, even when opinions clash and discovery is sharp. Looking back at where I started two years ago--angry, hurt and addicted to perfection and my husband's love-- to where I am today-- joyful, well equipped with healthy boundaries and grounded in my own authentic self whom I love unconditionally-- I'd say that my time with the Family, both in Group and Facilitator Training has been invaluable to my life journey.

My weekly Family Groups have given me a safe space and focused information to push at a regular pace to my authentic self. I'm a firm believer in momentum. Sometimes the false self relies on inertia and comfort to defeat this push to the real self. The commitment of The Family and that of veteran facilitators like Margaret Smith especially leave no room for such excuses to hold water. Because of their dedication and indomitable commitment, we HAVE to face the facts. This really helps to speed up the process. I'm satisfied that in the Contemplative Discovery Pathway I can leave no stone unturned and even when I've backslid, my group is there to hold me accountable and help me forward. The Family Groups ARE bringing healing and spreading compassion, we just have to multiply them so that we can overcome the negative forces in our society. This is what I believe and one of the reasons why I forced myself to overcome the trepidation I had to facilitate a group. Margaret invited me to co-facilitate with her in a weekly Family: People Helping People Group and I started last week.

If I don't do my share, who will?



**Group  
Facilitator  
Training  
with  
Dr. Victoria Allen**

When The Family started several years ago, we knew we needed trained therapists to lead groups, but where could we find them? The answer: We can train our own! With a grant from the Templeton Foundation, we are providing training seminars for those who wish to become voluntary facilitators working with The Family. Every Saturday morning from 9 am to 12 noon, a group of about 50 persons gather at New Providence Community Center for a training seminar to learn basics of psychotherapy and group dynamics through lectures, handouts and participating in a group

process every Saturday and in a weekly family meeting.

Every Saturday, our director of training, Dr. Marie Allen Carroll, has a therapist or facilitator provide teaching related to therapy or psychological growth and Dr. David Allen's Contemplative Discovery Pathway theory. This is a launching pad for discussion and the group process which follows. Everyone who completes the training receives a Certificate indicating the phases (semesters) they have completed. After participating in and then helping to facilitate groups during the Saturday morning training,

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**ABOUT THE FAMILY: PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE**

THE FAMILY: PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE is a program of free, community based therapy groups for adults and adolescents throughout New Providence, using qualified therapists. We are building The Bahamas and reaching out to the world.

Our Vision: Helping Our People Everywhere

Our Mission: People Helping People

If you want to help or share in this great work,

■ Attend a FAMILY group    ■ Join our training program to become a Group Facilitator

■ Make a donation via Scotiabank: 70375-3001-602 (Donations are under the direction of a distinguished accounting firm.)

If you want to:

■ Join a Family Group / Become a Group Facilitator:    Contact the Family Office at 698-0155.

■ Start a Family Group/Request Dr. Allen's Material:    Contact Dr. Allen (Renascence) at 327-8718/9.

■ Book Dr. Allen:    Email <dfallen43@gmail.com>.

**SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AT [WWW.FAMILYHELPINGPEOPLE.COM](http://WWW.FAMILYHELPINGPEOPLE.COM)**

persons can begin to work with a therapist in facilitating one of the weekly Family meetings. In the Feature Story this month, Mrs. Patrina Farquarson shares how she has grown through the Facilitator Training. She describes how the Saturday facilitator training has changed her life. She is now a co-facilitator in a weekly family meeting as well as an active participant and co-facilitator in a seminar training group.

On October 14, I had the opportunity to lead the group facilitator training, using quotes by Frederick Buechner, author of numerous books on the interaction of psychology, literature and spirituality. I have studied how Dr. Allen's Contemplative Discovery Pathway is reflected in Buechner's memoirs, novels and philosophical writings. In the August 2017 newsletter, I shared Buechner quotes on the importance of listening to your life in order to hear the sounds of God speaking to you personally. I recounted how Buechner had stumbled upon the reality of Christ as a young adult and how he became a Presbyterian minister, professor and published author. Later, when he faced the near-death of his daughter from self-starvation (anorexia), he began psychotherapy with a therapist to try to help his daughter, and found he was a large part of her problem. Out of this experience came new insights of how his father's suicide when he was 10 had affected him and his relationship with his own family. In several memoirs Buechner shared how individual and group therapy gave him new awareness of the ways God was working through his painful past although he had not known it at the time. This awareness of God's grace and mercy amidst the pain of life is what we are learning in *The Family*, too.

In his "doubter's dictionary" *Whistling in the Dark* (1988) and *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (1973, 1993), Buechner gives ordinary words a spiritual twist, a profoundly religious dimension to show how--whether we are aware of it or not--the Holy is all around us. His definition of "Help" was used in the September 2017 newsletter to express the essence of the Family's People Helping People experience. In today's training seminar, we read some of Buechner's other definitions and discussed how they related to our own experience in *The Family*. Below I share quotes we discussed in our training seminar. Please see how these definitions and quotes relate to your understanding of yourself and your spiritual journey.

**PSYCHOTHERAPY** | After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God came strolling through the cool of the day and asked them two questions: "Where are you?" and "What is this that you have done?" Psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and the like have been asking the same ones ever since.

"Where are you?" lays bare the present. They are in hiding, that's where they are. What is it they want to hide? From whom do they want to hide it? What does it cost them to hide it? Why are they so unhappy with things as they are that they are trying to conceal it from the world by hiding, and from themselves by covering, their nakedness with aprons?

"What is this that you have done?" lays bare the past. What did they do to get this way? What did they hope would happen by doing it? What did they fear would happen? What did the serpent do? What was it that made them so ashamed?

God is described as cursing them then, but in view of his actions at the end of the story and right on through the end of the New Testament, it seems less a matter of vindictively inflicting them with the consequences than of honestly confronting them with the consequences. Because of who they are and what they have done, this is the result. There is no undoing it. There is no going back to the garden.

But then comes the end of the story where God with his own hands makes them garments of skins and clothes them. It is the

most moving part of the story. They can't go back, but they can go forward clothed in a new way--clothed, that is, not in the sense of having their old defenses again behind which to hide who they are and what they have done but in the sense of having a new understanding of who they are and a new strength to draw on for what lies before them to do now.

Many therapists wouldn't touch biblical teachings with a ten-foot pole, but in their own way, and at their best, they are often following them. (*Whistling in the Dark* 105-10)

**MEMORY** | ... I am inclined to believe that God's chief purpose in giving us memory is to enable us to go back in time so that if we didn't play those roles right the first time round, we can still have another go at it now. We cannot undo our old mistakes or their consequences any more than we can erase old wounds that we have both suffered and inflicted, but through the power that memory gives us of thinking, feeling, imagining our way back through time we can at long last finally finish with the past in the sense of removing its power to hurt us and other people and to stunt our growth as human beings.

The sad things that happened long ago will always remain part of who we are just as the glad and gracious things will too, but instead of being a burden of guilt, recrimination, and regret that make us constantly stumble as we go, even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead. It is through memory that we are able to reclaim much of our lives that we have long since written off by finding that in everything that has happened to us over the years God was offering us possibilities of new life and healing which, though we may have missed them at the time, we can still choose and be brought to life by and healed by all these years later.

Another way of saying it, perhaps, is that memory makes it possible for us both to bless the past, even those parts of it that we have always felt cursed by, and also to be blessed by it. If this kind of remembering sounds like what psychotherapy is all about, it is because of course it is, but I think it is also what the forgiveness of sins is all about--the interplay of God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of God and each other. To see how God's mercy was for me buried deep even in my father's death was not just to be able to forgive my father for dying and God for letting him die so young and without hope and all the people like my mother who were involved in his death but also to be able to forgive myself for all the years I had failed to air my crippling secret so that then, however slowly and uncertainly, I could start to find healing. It is in the experience of such healing that I believe we experience also God's loving forgiveness of us, and insofar as memory is the doorway to both experiences, it becomes not just therapeutic but sacred. (*Telling Secrets* 32-34)

*Dr. Victoria Allen completed a M.S. in English at Georgetown University and a Ph.D. in American Literature at the Catholic University of America with a dissertation on Frederick Buechner. She is a retired Associate Professor of English from the University of The Bahamas and the author of numerous articles on Christianity and literature. Listening to Life: Psychology and Spirituality in the Writings of Frederick Buechner (1999) published by American Literary Press is her second book. No less an accomplishment, Dr. Victoria Allen is the wife of Family Director Dr. David Allen, and the mother of Dr. Marie Allen-Carroll and Mr. David Allen, Jr. She is a vital part of "The Family: People Helping People."*

**LECTIO DIVINA**

**"But let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." - James 1:19-20 -**

## THE FAMILY: PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE MEETING TIMES & PLACES - OCTOBER 2017

FAMILY	LOCATION	DAY	TIME
WillaMae Pratt Ctr.	Fox Hill	Monday	3:30 – 5:00pm
Simpson Penn Ctr.	Fox Hill	Monday	3:30 – 5:00pm
Collins Ave. Teens	7th Terr. Collins Ave.	Monday & Thursday	4:00 – 5:30pm
Glad Tidings	Kemp Rd.	Monday	6:00 - 8:00pm
Warfare Group	Collins Ave.	Monday	6:00 – 7:30pm
Carmichael Rd.	Law Offices Opp. St. Gregory's Church	Monday	6:00 – 7:30pm
Great Commission	Wulff Rd.	Tuesday	11:00 – 12:30pm
<b>East St. Gospel Chapel</b>	<b>East St.</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>4:00 – 6:00pm</b>
Collins Ave. Parent Group	7th Terr. Collins Ave.	Wednesday	4:00 – 5:30pm
Her Majesty's Prison (M)	Fox Hill	Wednesday	9:00 – 10:30am
Her Majesty's Prison (F)	Fox Hill	Wednesday	10:30am – 12 noon
NPCC	Blake Rd.	Wednesday	6:30 – 8:00pm
Guidance Counselors	Mable Walker Professional Ctr.	Thursday	8:45 – 11:00am
Evangelistic Temple	Collins Ave.	Thursday	4:00 – 5:30pm
Cancer Society	Collins Ave.	Thursday	5:30 – 7:00pm
NPCC	Blake Rd.	Thursday	6:15 – 7:45pm
Elizabeth Estates Children's Home	Elizabeth Estates	Thursday	6:00 – 7:30pm
Holy Trinity	Stapledon Gardens	Friday	6:00 – 7:30pm
NPCC – Facilitator Training	Blake Rd.	Saturday	9:00 – 12:00pm

**\*Private Groups\***

**\*Adult & Adolescent Groups\***

**\*Adult Groups\***

## VISION – H.O.P.E. (HELPING OUR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE) MISSION – PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

***If we accept that we are our problem, then we become open to be our solution.***



**THE FAMILY OFFICE**  
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1 (242) 676-8619 or  
thefamilyphp@gmail.com

Office Hours:  
9am - 5pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri  
9am - 4pm Wed

Visit us on the web at  
[www.familyhelpingpeople.com](http://www.familyhelpingpeople.com)

### PARTNERS

Templeton World Charity Foundation  
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If you'd like to support **THE FAMILY** and share in this transformational work, we'd be happy to receive your donations via Scotiabank 70375-3001-602 for more information or to support, contact us at 327-8718/9 or [dfallen43@gmail.com](mailto:dfallen43@gmail.com)