



Children's Mental Health Ontario

Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario

CMHO Board Chair's Speech - 2011 AGM

Thank you.

Don't know if any of you watch a TV show called, "Inside the Actors Studio."

It's a show about the craft of acting.

The moderator interviews prominent actors about their approach to acting.

It's notable for two things:

A truly pompous moderator, though in fairness, one who definitely does his homework and obviously knows something about acting.

And his administration of a standard battery of nine questions at the end of each show.

It's one of those Proustian sets of questions the answers to which are supposed to provide us great insight into the person's character.

One of the questions is, "What turns you on?"

My answer to that question is ideas.

Big ideas. Little ideas. Any idea that contributes to solving a problem, contributing to progress, making something work better, faster, smoother, more efficiently, more effectively.

Ideas that evoke a "Hey, that's a neat idea!!!" to ideas that demand a cry of, "Yes, that's it!!!"

Ideas whose brilliance takes a while to ferment and ideas that you know instantly are going to make a difference.

Ideas that snap into someone's mind when they aren't focusing on finding a solution. Ideas that emerge during a discussion. Ideas that you steal.

I'm happy to report that that being Chair of Children's Mental Health Ontario for the past two years has provided me the opportunity to be turned on a lot.

We have bristled with ideas that have and will continue to help us achieve our twin objectives of strengthening our member agencies and being the catalyst for system change.

Ideas that have come from our staff, our volunteers, our members and their staff and volunteers.

Ideas like establishing the Canadian Centre of Accreditation, which will provide third-party credibility to our accreditation program, while allowing CMHO to ensure that the child and youth mental health standards will be maintained at their traditional high levels.

I'm particularly turned on by a series of ideas, each of which builds on the earlier idea.

Like recognizing that if CMHO is going to be the catalyst for system change, we had better be a thought leader on system change and to achieve that we had better do some original thinking and specifically we should develop some relevant policies and to develop the most relevant and thoughtful policies, we'd be better to go to the source of knowledge, our members' staffs and volunteers who are on the front lines of thinking and innovation rather than ask some policy wonk to sit in front of their computer and conjure something up.

Thanks to all the ideas that those of you who contributed to the four policy papers we published this summer, generated.

And we will be asking you to contribute more as we expand our library of policy papers in the coming months and years.

One of the great advantages of the not-for-profit sector over the private sector is that people don't sue you when you steal their ideas. In fact, they help you implement them.

After much thought, discussion and meetings, we thought we had found a solution to ensure effective involvement of youth, particularly consumers of the child and youth mental health system, into CMHO's governance.

Then we learned how New Path is doing it.

"Dah!!! That's a way better idea; let's just steal it." Which, with their help, we have.

I get an extra boost of excitement when someone enhances the value of one idea by adding a new idea on top of it.

A couple of years ago it was clear that using our six regions as the basis our field communication network was not working all that well.

The six regions were simply not homogeneous enough to engender collective action. So someone said, "Let's break them up into smaller units that better reflect Ontario geography and communities."

And thus our system of eleven Satellites was born to help organize and execute our advocacy efforts and Children's Mental Health Week locally.

But here's the neat part. Someone said, "Let's use them for a whole lot more than that!"

So, they were also the main conduit for the collection of input and feedback in the development of our policy papers last summer. And they became the route for members to contribute to our 2011 pre-budget submission.

And new ideas will generate more new ways to use our satellites as we move forward.

In fact, we hope they will become our primary vehicle for you to provide your ideas not just to CMHO, but, more importantly, to our cause.

As Gordon will point out, we are entering a new and more complex stage in our advocacy efforts and we need all the ideas we can get to effect change.

As Philip Randolph, the great and early leader of the American Civil Rights movement said, "Nothing counts but pressure, pressure, pressure."

And ideas that will improve the child and youth mental health system will be the most effective way for us to create pressure.

Ideas so good that it will be self evident that they should be implemented and funded.

I'm not a great fan of "ideation" sessions. Not only is it a terrible word - who comes up with these words - but in my experience those sessions don't tend to generate many good ideas.

But I do think that some neat ideas do come up when a few people grapple with a problem and think hard about good, workable solutions, not flights of fancy.

When we were looking for a way to put some new life into Children's Mental Health Week, someone said, "Let's gets kids to make some videos." (He claims he doesn't remember saying it, so I won't embarrass him by identifying him.)

Whoever came up with it, it's an idea that has grown into our very successful annual "Change the View" video contest.

Successful in terms of generating some very powerful videos. Successful in terms of generating youth involvement. Successful in terms of generating publicity. Successful in terms of being an excuse for a great party to announce the winners.

And there was the idea of asking our members what's important to you and to rate our performance.

The decision to conduct an Annual Member Satisfaction Survey evolved from that idea. The first wave, which was conducted last spring, enlightened us and has already re-shaped some of our activities and will certainly affect our future plans.

Fifty of you answered the survey last spring. I urge all of you to do so when we conduct the second annual wave next spring.

It will become a primary means of ensuring that we are allocating our resources to what you view as the most important aspects of our work and letting us know if what we are doing is leading to us doing a better job.

I think those are seven pretty good ideas that should turn on anyone interested in CMHO and the achievement of our objectives.

And there were many more that have contributed to our success.

I raise the idea of the importance of ideas because they will be source of our future success.

New ways to do things. New ways to do the stuff we are doing now better.

And I urge you not just to come up with ideas, but to voice them.

Probably the greatest barrier to ideas getting implemented is people's reluctance to tell people of an idea that they've had because they are concerned that it's not a good idea.

When you voice an idea, the worst thing that can happen is that someone will simply say, "That's a really stupid idea."

It would be far worse for everyone we serve if we can't take advantage of a great idea because you didn't voice it.

Ray Kroc, the builder of McDonald's, popularized the phrase "There is no "I" in Team."

I think Michael Jordan, possibly the best basketball player who ever lived and certainly among the winningest, was on to something when he responded to someone who said to him, "There is no I in Team" by saying, "There is in win."

And there is in "ideas."

We obviously had a big win, albeit a too long delayed one, this year, but as we all know, we need many more wins if the children and youth of Ontario dealing with mental health concerns are going to get the level of service they deserve.

Ideas are born of individual minds, often stimulated by someone or something and sometimes they take a while to crystallize, but each of you has a very powerful idea generating machine in your head. I urge you to use it as often as you can on behalf of our cause.

One thing that I learned during thirty years in the advertising industry - an industry totally predicated on generating ideas - is that everyone has the capacity to come up with game-changing ideas. And good organizations, like this one, will always embrace good ideas.

So as you go about your work day or as you are taking a walk or jogging or as you are reading the paper or listening to the radio as you drive to work and an idea comes to you that you think will help us in our struggle, please make sure to remember it, to share it, to voice it. It could be the one that makes all the difference.

Thank you