



AgeSong
senior communities

Beyond Dementia Toward Forgetfulness Care

*With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this
Calling*

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.*

Creating Therapeutic Environments

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*Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned know of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.*

From "Four Quartets" by T.S. Elliot

HIS LIFE WAS HIS MESSAGE – REMEMBERING JIM BUGENTAL

“Dr. Bugental, but there is no such thing as resistance!” I remember the first time I met Jim Bugental at a two-day workshop he gave in the Bay Area. I was a graduate student at Stanford, firmly believing that psychological concepts such as resistance were not only archaic remnants of some old worn-out theory but, moreover, actually harming our ability to see the client in front of us. “Hmm, sure there is, I notice it all the time!” is the way Jim responded to my protest all the while continuing his walk down the school corridor to get himself a cup of coffee. I was mildly irritated by this man and wasn’t sure if I should stay for the rest of the workshop. But I did. Jim invited an audience member to participate in a demonstration of his work before the group. A woman volunteered. What I saw in the next twenty minutes made me become a student of his brand of psychotherapy, someone who in the ensuing decades would attend just about every workshop and group supervision he offered.

What fascinated me about him, what converted me to become a Bugentalian, later even a co-teacher and co-author? There was something about the way Jim worked with the woman from the audience, someone he had never met, who, within ten minutes time, was at the brink of tears revealing to herself and others the struggles in her life and what troubled her so deeply. Jim was present with her, gently helped her uncover what she had not allowed herself to see. Yes, these twenty minutes were unforgettable, life altering to me.

Some twenty years later, I continue to learn and teach about these two fundamental existential-humanistic terms which Jim introduced to me: presence and process. Jim embodied them both. This is what made me fall in love with this man irrespective of his philosophical imprecision. Behind Jim’s approach to helping others lies a view that people deep inside know their purpose and that it was a therapist’s job to help discover it. I felt Jim’s own deep respect for my inner knowing and it gave me the confidence to believe in my path, the power to be courageous in making difficult choices. Jim never made me feel wrong for who I was, refrained from telling me what to do. When I did ask for advice, he would answer: “You know, I can tell you what to do. But you need to find your own answer to what is right for you – only you yourself can do that. No one can know about your life, no one can live your life for you.”

Jim emphasized this in all of his teachings. For him, psychotherapy was about awareness, not telling people how to live their lives. He was famous for his sense of humor, his teasing, witty and sometimes provocative remarks. Jim was a deep and complex human being, always searching for more, never satisfied with easy answers. In his mid-eighties he confided in some of us that he still had another seven books to write. He was not going to stop. Life was too precious to sit still, too awesome not to explore and discover more. He loved his work, the people around him, loved life. Above all Jim was human, beautifully human. You leave big shoes to fill, dear friend and teacher – and I love you for it.

~Nader Robert Shabahangi

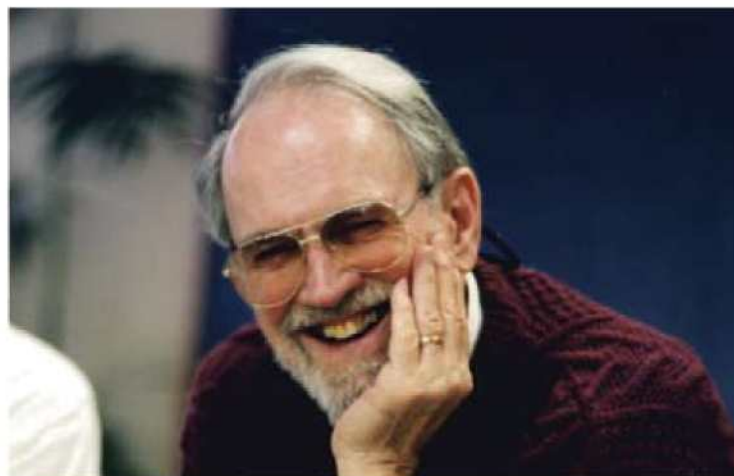
Creating Therapeutic Environments

Hidden Blessings

When my husband, Jim, suffered a massive stroke six years ago, I saw it only as a tragedy. In many ways, it was. A gifted writer, teacher, therapist, unable to remember his past, often at a loss for words, his life work inaccessible to him, he was no longer who he had been. This was a time for mourning. Or so it seemed.

It is true that something was gone. A great deal was gone. He would never have chosen to live in this state. And yet, he did live. As the months went by I witnessed a gradual transformation from production, promise and potential to pure existence. What “might be” slowly simmered and simplified into “what is.” This moment in time became all of time. Past and future dissolved into present. As all the “could have been’s” evaporated into “never again”, his pure essence entered the room, filled the space, and nurtured us all.

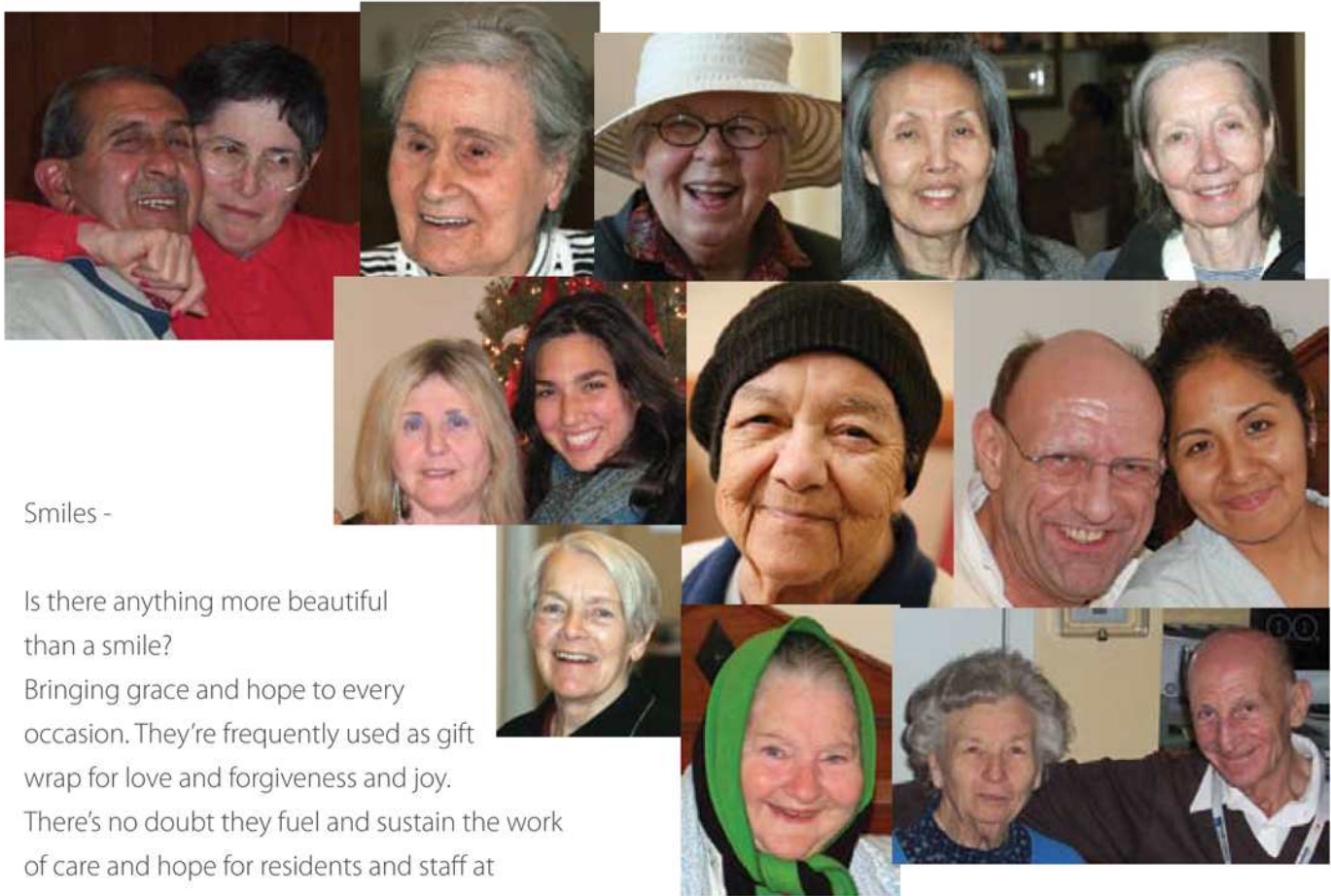
The long phrases that had flowed so easily distilled into a few essential words: “thank you”, “I love you”. Metaphors seemed to flow naturally, capturing immediate experience, “It’s all dark behind me”, “I am underwater, everything I touch floats out of reach,” “I enter a hall full of doors and they are all closed;” simple announcements to us of where he was, and then a tear, a smile, an outstretched hand.



In these last quiet, “unproductive” years I learned the real meaning of a passionate life: the aliveness of a still pond with births and deaths simmering invisible in the depths below the surface. Everyone around him knew it, felt it, relished being in his presence. His ability to stay completely in the now, communing with the Heron who lived in the tree outside his window, to the person in the room across from him, to the music he always loved, the fullness of his response, the ease of his laughter, his empathy with the suffering of others, his ability to grab and appreciate every small gift that came his way immediately, before it disappeared.

Although none of us who loved Jim would have imagined or wished for this prolonged ending to a full life, it turned out to be his final super-abundant testament to everything he believed.

~Elizabeth Bugental



Smiles -

Is there anything more beautiful than a smile?
Bringing grace and hope to every occasion. They're frequently used as gift wrap for love and forgiveness and joy. There's no doubt they fuel and sustain the work of care and hope for residents and staff at AgeSong.

We wish you all the smiles your Heart can hold.

Editor Ed Voris is a consultant to community development non-profits, specializing in housing and finance. He was recently diagnosed with Dementia.



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