

First words



My journey with hats started at an early age. At about seven, I remember bouncing off the walls at home with a red tartan bonnet, complete with a red pompom (think of *The Krankies*) which, sadly, was later devoured by the family Jack Russell.

My next memory, at the age of about 12, involved, perhaps bizarrely, a treasured grey cloth cap (think of *Last of the Summer Wine*). On one summer road-trip, my parents, sister and I left our campsite in Grindelwald – a beautiful spot on the north side of the Swiss Alps – to take the Jungfrau mountain train up through the majestic Eiger. Wearing such a cap failed to prevent me from suffering altitude sickness and at a point when my father thought I was going to leave a deposit on the train floor, he kindly took my cap off and turned it into an impromptu sickness receptacle. Needless to say, this acted as a tremendous incentive for me not to be sick and so the cap never needed to multitask.

Nowadays, when I write, as now, I wear a black and white LA Kings baseball cap. I found it after driving over it in a Safeway car park in Edinburgh, many years ago. Classy, I know, but I was a student then. Initially I feared I had run over a small cat, so the relief I felt when I realised it wasn't, encouraged me to rescue it and give it a new home, albeit after a good machine wash at max setting (the cap, not the cat). No idea why I wear it but it seems to help me focus and concentrate. Edward De Bono would be proud of me.

Now where was I? Ah yes, hats. Professionally, we're living in interesting times. There is a renewed debate about what constitutes workplace counselling and the relationship that counsellors have with organisations. There seems to be a continuum emerging, along which we have those who champion the sanctity of counselling, protected from external organisational influences, and others who are more enthusiastic about embedding counselling within the organisation.

This journal's theme seems to reflect the many hats that workplace counsellors can wear in the wider workplace. It's great to welcome back Nicola Banning, whom many of you will remember from her 'year in the life of' series a few years ago. Nicola and Chris

Johnstone write about how their counselling experience has enabled them to set up and run anti-bullying workshops (p2) and how this contributes to a positive working environment.

I'm pleased to introduce Eamonn O'Mahony, whose hat revolves around the notion of providing supervision to help managers in their work (p9). I've heard of quite a few organisations offering this reflective sounding board for staff and I'm grateful to Eamonn for writing about the development of his groups.

A welcome also to Susan Cousins, who takes a personal perspective to explore the experience of being a lone black worker within her workplace counselling setting (p13).

Thanks to Kathy Woodcock and Janet Soma who, after their recent BACP Workplace conference presentation, extol the virtues of 'business referrals' as a referral opportunity for managers and applaud the practice of brief therapy (p17).

As purse strings tighten further, it's perhaps opportune to have Dr Mark Griffiths' article on gambling in the workplace (p20). He sets out some key points to consider in understanding gambling and developing robust yet supportive workplace policies.

There's a welcome return for Mandy Rutter as she teases out recent trends and media coverage of the role of women in business (p24). I would imagine there are few workplace counsellors who have not worked with clients who present with issues that are due to their gender or race.

I think Nicola sums up the opportunities for workplace counsellors when she states: 'The value of having counsellors stepping out of the counselling room and into the training room ... is that we bring our understanding of the organisational culture from our client work and our knowledge of the shadow side of the organisation.' (p2)

Wherever you sit on the workplace counselling continuum, hats off to you all.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Rick Hughes, Editor

rick@thecreativewritingservice.co.uk