

On Clara Hughes and the "Let's Talk Campaign"

For those of you not in Canada who have never heard of this, here is a reference to what I am talking about here.

Clara Hughes

Clara Hughes is the representative of choice in the **Let's Talk** campaign in Canada. I recently saw her doing a short piece on a Canadian magazine style show. She looked quite happy and stated something like this: (I am paraphrasing here and not quoting directly as I did not get it written down at the time.)

This last year has been the best. I feel better than I have for years, especially during this last year. (Clara is promoting treatment for "depression") and it is because sharing my experience with others gives me a real purpose in life now which gives me a better feeling than I ever got from winning Olympic medals. (roughly stated) People walk up to me and tell how grateful they are that I am speaking out this way.

Whenever I hear things like this I hear **hints** given regarding what the person was depressed **ABOUT**. In my **own** way of hearing it is about psychological/events/relationship (psycho-social) problems in life that perhaps went unresolved and often were never **identified** at all. But bio psych of course does not understand "depression" in this way. In fact, most psychiatrists now believe the person's actual life experience is largely **irrelevant** and that is why **many** of us fight **against** this system. The bio psych system tends to **reduce** pretty much **everything** to chemical, electrical, synapsing or genetic problems...in other words, **mechanics**.

ALL people need to believe that their existence...their experiences, their thoughts, their feelings, their relationships and their **SELF** definition, and self direction **matter**, both to them and to at least a **FEW** others with whom they can **connect** psycho spiritually. So I think for Clara, being a spokesperson for the mental illness system is fulfilling that **human** need.

The result? The depression lifts. But does that mean that the change in her is really coming from the mood altering drugs used to "treat" depression? Many people get past "depression" (an **emotional** response to something) **without** drugs. I am one of them, (in my own **past** history) and I know many others as well.

What many people opposed to bio psych are concerned about is this idea that "depression" has nothing to do with living life. I have nothing against Clara. On a personal level I might even like Clara if I knew her. But, Clara and those like her, do **NOT** represent the experiences of many of us who have been involved with psychiatry, bio psych in particular. Quite the contrary. Of course "we" don't get asked to share **our** experiences or act as spokespersons for the system, because we don't promote the **system** in the positive light that it **requires** from those

who become "patient representatives." Not only that, if we say something **publicly** against the system, we often get threatened, subtly or not, with more "treatment" by force (or fraud) if necessary. Sometimes it is suggested to others that our complaints **about** our treatment are just more "symptoms" proving how "right" the system is to treat us...for our own **GOOD** of course.

Bio psych is not a democracy. It is bordering (?) on being a dictatorship with no interest in public **debates** listing pros and **cons**, or in listening to those who are not at all happy about **their** treatment and experiences.

So while the inexperienced public, or the family members of the psychiatrized, may accept Clara Hughes and those like her as representational of all people defined as "mentally ill," we who do **not** share her point of view do **not** accept her as representational of us. You won't hear from us though as representatives promoted by bio psych and heard as equals. That is because the system is promoting **itself** and it does not want any negative viewpoints spoiling the pretty picture it is promoting.

Many people do not talk about **their** experiences because they are made to know that **doing** so will not be tolerated by the system that promotes itself. Many of us also know that if Clara suddenly **started** talking about what is **wrong** with the system, her job as a patient representative and spokesperson would come to a screeching halt and no one would ever **really** know why....