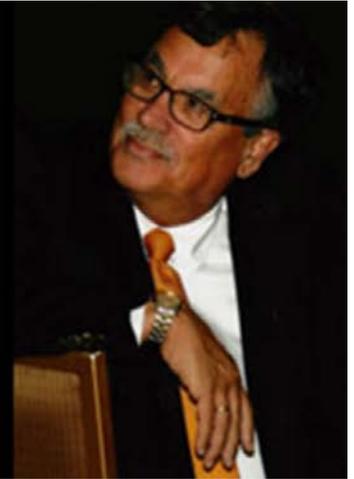


MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



THE FINE ART OF RESTRAINT

I have been a helper and observer of helpers for a long time. One of the lessons I've learned is that a key characteristic of effective helpers is that they don't try to do everything for those they are helping. They know that often *"less is more"* in the helping relationship and that *"not doing"* can be what is most helpful for their clients. This *"not doing"* aspect of helping is counterintuitive. Helpers need to fight against the tendency to Do..Do..Do..They need to learn the **Fine Art of Restraint**.

Like all helpers, TIP volunteers need to learn the **Fine Art of Restraint**. Why? Because our clients want us to be restrained in our helping. In their letters over the years, clients have expressed gratitude that our volunteers not only take the initiative to reach out, but also know when to pull back.

What does practicing restraint mean for TIP Volunteers in practical terms? It means...

- Not being intrusive.
- Not putting oneself or the TIP organization at risk by taking actions in violation of TIP policies and procedures.
- Not making decisions for clients which they can make for themselves.
- Not giving advice.
- Not imposing one's own values and beliefs on clients.
- Not being blind to clients' strengths.
- Not ignoring safety standards because of the overwhelming need to *"help"* clients.
- Not doing, doing, doing....but BEING.
- Not talking, talking, talking....but BEING QUIET.

To practice the **Fine Art of Restraint** TIP Volunteers must believe...

- Clients are strong and will survive the tragedy they have experienced. They have coped with crisis in the past (without me!) and will do so again.
- Clients need to be given the freedom and space to control their situation to the greatest extent possible. Regaining control is a major task for our clients.

- TIP volunteers respond to events which are very personal, and clients often need private moments.
- The welfare of the TIP organization is a major factor when volunteers are making decisions in the field.
- Clients don't have a job description for TIP volunteers. It is up to TIP volunteers to say NO to requests beyond the volunteers' limits.
- There is little volunteers can "*fix*" on TIP calls.
- Not doing and "just being" has a powerful impact on survivors of tragedy.
- A feeling of helplessness during or after a TIP call is not a sign that a volunteer has failed. Rather, helplessness is a normal feeling which comes with practicing restraint and not being able to "*make it all better.*"
- Emotional First Aid is not only what volunteers should practice, but it's the **ONLY** thing they should practice.

Practicing the Fine Art of Restraint does not mean TIP volunteers have limited impact. Quite the contrary. We know from years of receiving client feedback that TIP volunteers make incredible long-term impact in their clients lives. And we know why. It's because clients appreciate that our volunteers do not overwhelm them with "*help*" but simply provide a caring presence.

I believe TIP has survived and thrived for 33 years because we are an organization of helpers who have a single-minded focus on our clients' primary need (a caring presence). We are effective as helpers because we respect our clients as strong human beings who don't need "*superhelpers.*" We are effective helpers because we practice the **Fine Art of Restraint.**