

Kibble/CYC-Net  
Webinar Series

# The Practice of Nurturing Touch in Care Settings

## “An Understanding of Touch & Strategies for Healthy Touch Environments”

James Freeman

# Presentation Abstract

## Webinar 2

### An Understanding of Touch & Strategies for Healthy Touch Environments



In this session we will:

- Examine our knowledge of touch
- Classify types of touch
- Examine strategies for a healthy touch environment

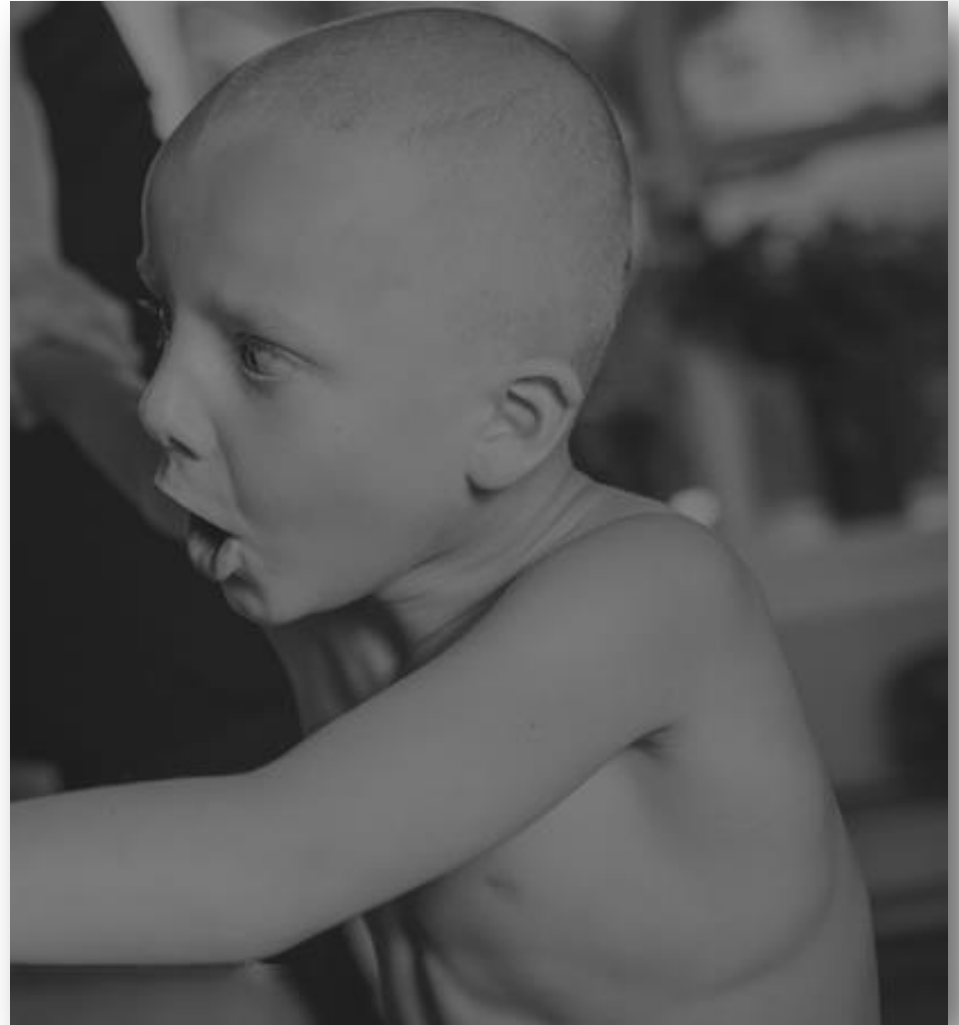


## What we know about touch

# Touch Deprivation Inhibits Development

**1970 – 1980s**

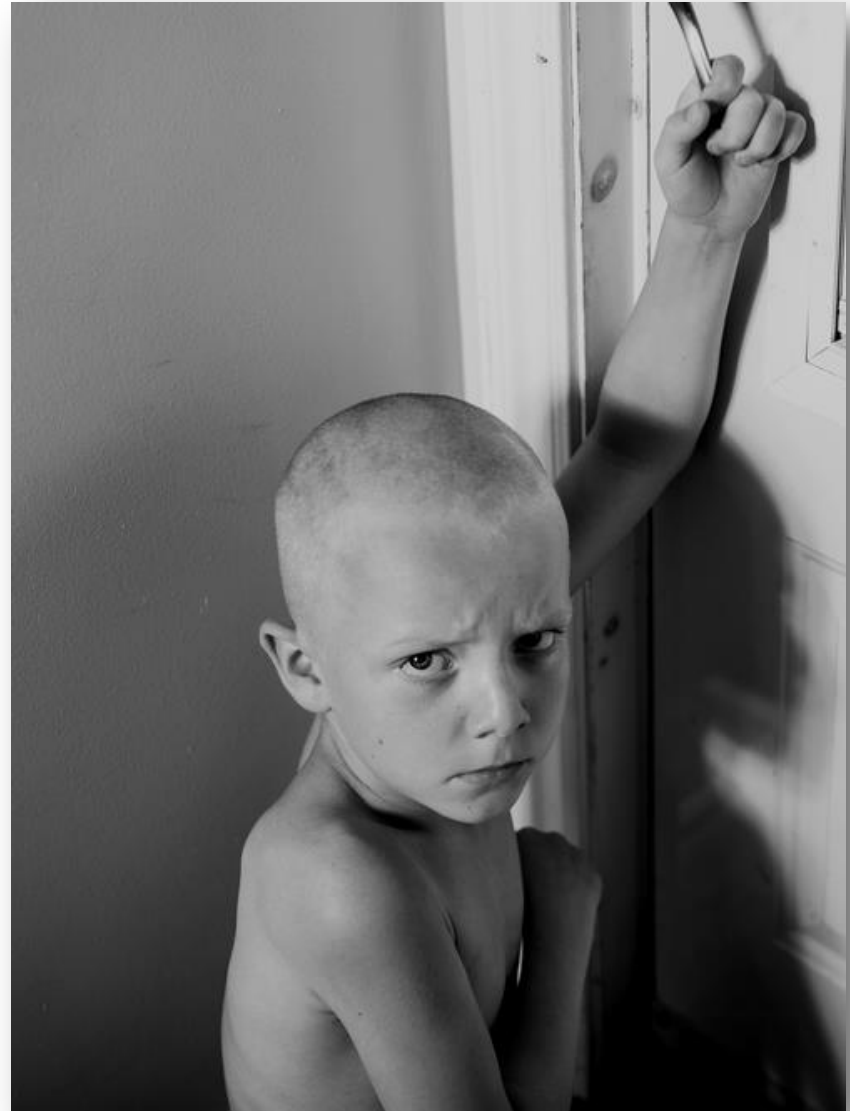
“Children of the Decree” in communist Romania under dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918-1989)



# Touch Deprivation Inhibits Development

“Children of the Decree” had:

- greatly delayed mental and motor skills development
- suffered grossly stunted growth
- tended to grasp and rock themselves.



# Touch Deprivation Inhibits Development

## 1970 – 1980s

Thousands of the Romanian orphans were permanently affected. They showed the same signs of social under development in later life.



# Affectionate Touch Boosts Healthy Development

## 1940 – 1950s

- René Spitz (1887-1974)
- Documented direct child observation
- ‘Anaclitic Depression’



Photo Credit: Michael Carroll, President, Romanian Children's Relief.  
Image source: <http://phenomena.nationalgeographic.com/2013/07/31/the-orphanage-problem>



# Indispensable Role of Love & Affection

## 1960 – 1970s

- Harry Harlow (1905-1981)
- One of the first to scientifically investigate the nature of love & affection
- “Contact Comfort”





# Touch is Essential for Human Development

Touch is a fundamental human need which influences:

- Physical health & growth
- Social & emotional development



# Touch is Essential for Human Development

**Touch is a fundamental human need which:**

- Improves immune functioning
- Enhances attentiveness





# Touch is Essential for Human Development

**Touch is a fundamental human need which:**

- Alleviates depressive symptoms
- Reduces pain & stress hormones





## Classification of Types of Touch

# Classification of Types of Touch



- I. Touch avoidance
- II. Everyday touch
- III. Purposeful touch
- IV. Touch as an abuse of power

**Reference: Slides 12-19 Classification of Touch Types**  
Warwick, L. (2017) Touching matters: An ethnographic study of adult-child relationships and the use of touch in residential child care. (Doctoral thesis). University of Nottingham. Retrieved from <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/41495>



# Classification of Types of Touch - Touch Avoidance

## Touch Avoidance

- 1: Respecting boundaries
- 2: Preventing abuse

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)



# Classification of Types of Touch - Touch Avoidance

## Touch Avoidance

3: Protecting staff

4: Crafting distance  
(general & specific)

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)





# Classification of Types of Touch - Everyday Touch

## Everyday Touch

5: Consequence of group living

6: Task-oriented

7: Greeting

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)



# Classification of Types of Touch - Everyday Touch

## Everyday Touch

8: Acknowledgment  
(e.g. encouragement,  
reassurance, consolation)

9: Play

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)



# Classification of Types of Touch - Purposeful Touch

## Purposeful Touch

10: Escalation prevention

11: Nurture  
(past, present, future)

12: Protective tool  
(child, others, adults)

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)





# Classification of Types of Touch - Abuse of Power

## Abuse of Power

13: Controlling

14: Violent

15: Sexualized

Source: Warwick, L (2017 op cit)





## Strategies for a Healthy Touch Environment

# Selection & Hiring

- Hire trustworthy people
- Operate zero tolerance disrespect policy
- Eliminate people who don't feel right



**Reference Slides 21-22** Garfat, T. (1998). On the fear of contact, the need for touch, and creating youth care contexts where touching is okay. *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, 12(3).

# Training & Supervision

- Quality supervision, both scheduled & in life space
- Train on appropriate touch (including reading, respecting & responding to feedback)
- Awareness of unmet adult needs in relationships with kids



Source: Garfat, T. (1998) op cit



# Organisational Culture

- Create a climate where kids speak up if they don't feel good
- Hold each other accountable
- Make relational safety a priority



Source: Garfat, T. (1998) op cit

# Closing Thought



“There are times in care you can benefit from feeling cared about like a hug, positive talks, and being consistently in my life. It does not always have to be touch but nurturing and caring about me will show based on your actions.”

# References & Research Base

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Burns, M. (1993). Time In: A handbook for child and youth care professionals. Burns-Johnston Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.cyc-net.org/quote/quote-86.html>

Fewster, G. (2004). Just between you and me: Personal boundaries in professional relationships. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, 17(4), 8-18.

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# References & Research Base

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr069>
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Webinar Series

# Kibble CYC-Net Webinar 3

## “Disability Rights and the Intersection of CYC Characteristics”

Nancy Marshall



<https://www.kibble.org/kibble-cyc-net-webinar-series/>

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