



A message to Keele Psychology students

A Keele degree in Psychology and Biology, concurrently with a Cert.Ed.(1974) was a good stepping stone straight into science teaching in a state middle school, with a new science lab, resources and curriculum. The Psychology aspect became very helpful when I later coordinated a large Special Educational Needs Department, introducing the draft Code of Practice. It was therefore possible to highlight specific teaching methods e.g. for dyslexia, whilst building pupils' confidence and memory skills. This brought many excellent opportunities for professional collaboration, e.g. with the headteacher's MA thesis on bullying prevention, by enabling groups of very bright pupils to do the statistical analysis of 500+ 'friendship day' questionnaires. There was also a research project with an educational psychologist about individual learning styles - long before it became '*de rigueur*'; we presented a workshop/seminar at a BPS conference - one of our Keele lecturers was there!

I was awarded ill-health retirement at the age of 48 after a very traumatic time. However, round the corner there were new opportunities to make use of that Keele degree in Psychology. A presentation I wrote entitled 'A stress management blueprint for the future in Education' went to the Secretary of State for Education and the Shadow Education team, prompting some official correspondence and newspaper coverage. One of the editors of the Equal Treatment Bench Book (Judicial Studies Board) invited my input into the revisions of the chapters on 'Equality and Justice' and 'Disability'. I also agreed to be an ambassador for a Dept. of Health 'Working Minds' campaign at that time, speaking to health and safety reps, the Home Office, Inland Revenue staff, NERC and a Primary Care Trust. Members of the public were writing to me confidentially for support and advice, via an article I had written for the HSE. There were several national magazine articles published, based on my experiences and the suggestions I was putting forward regarding relaxation, work-life balance, health and safety and stress management. The internet also provided an ideal opportunity to develop some virtual space and a calm environment for visitors at www.relax-well.co.uk (Designs For Wellbeing).

A key moment? It was addressing a meeting of over 100 people at the House of Lords on the third hearing of the 'Dignity At Work' bill – without a script! Others are continuing with their pioneering work from that time, and workplace bullying can no longer be ignored. The subject is being addressed thoroughly by several eminent university professors and research teams.

For me, a new phase in my professional life is blossoming, after years of quietly researching the prevention and treatment of hospital acquired infections. The challenge is finding ways of extracting and communicating the main messages, all on a shoestring budget! So again, there are many Psychology study skills learned at Keele that are vital. *Google Scholar* is a very useful ally. Do be sure to read up on the benefits of sunlight - as a powerful disinfectant but also psychologically. I hope that Psychology courses these days are looking closely at nutrition and how it affects children's behaviour - also the benefits of good environmental design, exercise, relaxing artworks, words of inspiration, positive thought and family values.

If you are still wondering what to do with your Keele Psychology + Something degree, consider doing some travelling research to learn about the life, work and people of other countries. Every year about 100 Winston Churchill Fellowships are awarded to British citizens and it really is 'the chance of a lifetime'. It can open doors for the future. I found it was a great help (and good fun) to meet up with fellow Keele Alumni thousands of miles away. Wishing you all the best for your life ahead.

Grace Filby
Churchill Fellow of 2007
Reigate, Surrey
www.relax-well.co.uk
www.amazingphage.info