

A Wayward Club Experience

by Marcus Bolt

Like Fred, I too moved to Wayward* because of my job (I'm in computers, and Wayward has a burgeoning IT industry) and naturally joined the local Subud group. My name is Ed by the way. I was born in London, I'm fifty years old, have a degree in Computer Programming and, as I was exceptionally talented, could have been a pro footballer when I was young, but a serious knee injury and subsequently botched cartilage operation ruled that out.

To me as a Subud member of some thirty years standing, the Wayward way of doing things came as a shock. I've lived in the USA — again because of my job — for the last eight years, but I joined Subud in England, back in 1978, and wholeheartedly bought into the Subud culture. Thus I was used to a top down organisation of helpers and committees — International, Zonal, National, Regional, local — all following, to the letter, the guidelines and organisational structure laid down by its founder when Subud was first formed over fifty years ago. In turn, this structure was underpinned by an intrinsic belief that everything was 'the Will of Almighty God' as 'received' by Bapak. But Wayward's neutrality and autonomy from mainstream Subud certainly helped change my views on all that. It made me realise that Subud's in-built belief system regarding the provenance of its rigid structure meant no allowance could be made for even improving modifications. This intolerance to change was stifling growth and running counter to the spontaneous nature of the latihan process. It was all a bit of a personal epiphany for me, and this story attempts to describe how this came about.

The Wayward helpers are a pretty laid back bunch and seem to have no mutually agreed modus operandi beyond how to conduct openings — of which there are plenty — or any particular agenda or role compared to the old-style helpers groups I was used to back in England.

This new state of affairs is mainly due to the concept of self-funding clubs (such as 'The Bapak Talks Group', the 'Kejiwaan Day Society' and 'The Ramadan Association' for example), which cater for most members' predilections while enabling 'Subud' to remain nothing more than a neutral 'latihan delivery system'.

So, when I read a notice on the board about a club for members wanting to hone their inter-personal relationship skills and to do some 'personal development', I thought I'd like to join, despite still holding the belief, deep down, that one only needed the latihan, really, and through 'surrender' the way 'to be' in any given situation would arise spontaneously — if I were quiet or empty enough inside, that is. But, as they were offering big discounts on a two nights' stay at a plush hotel's conference centre (and some people I liked were attending) it seemed an attractive idea — and I needed a break — so I signed up for the advertised session.

There were five men and five women in total attending for the duration, including our two 'facilitators', Jake and Emma. I knew four of the group well and had seen the others at latihan, but somehow our paths had never crossed until now: Wayward is a big group.

Before dinner on the Friday evening, we gathered in a meeting room and introduced ourselves (first names only), each saying what we hoped to gain from the course. Then we were asked to mark on a one-to-ten scale our level of commitment. I chalked up a six, part of me still thinking I was on a 'jolly', as we say in Blighty.

Emma then wrote out on a flip chart the 'communication guidelines', explaining as she went along: 'These are all fairly standard to most personal development groups. First off, we ask that no one use "one", "we" or "they" in our inter-group communication. Rather say "I feel..." instead of "One feels..." or "We feel..." for example. That way we each "own" the statements we make.'

She then gave us an example; 'If I were to stand up at a group meeting and say, "We all do latihan to worship Almighty God...", I would be assuming that we were all members of an Abrahamic religion, thereby excluding any Buddhists, agnostics and atheists within the group. On the other hand, if I were to say instead, "I do latihan to worship Almighty God...", it's a personal belief and no one can, or should, argue with that.'

I remember being a little stunned at this. It had never crossed my mind before that people might do latihan for reasons other than worship. I snapped out of my reverie as Emma continued somewhat appositely:

'Secondly, it's important that we all listen actively to others speaking and not have side conversations, interrupt or be thinking of something else, or even our own response.

'Thirdly, Jake and I ask that each of you take responsibility for your feelings, expressing what you feel "here and now". It's valueless coming up to anyone after a session complaining that so and so made you feel angry, or not mentioning at the time that something made you sad, or happy. By not expressing feelings in the moment, a whole wealth of vital information and processing is lost. But that doesn't mean you should act out feelings by shouting, lashing out, or even leaving the room in a huff. Just try to express verbally how you're feeling at that moment. The feedback from the group will surprise you, I promise. And, finally, everything we hear must be kept in total confidence — nothing is to leave this room.' (And to honour that request, I've 'disguised' the others' experiences, their genders and ages etc.)

'One last thing, we ask that you all stay within the boundaries of the hotel for the duration and don't interact with non-members of the group, not phoning friends or family — unless it's a dire emergency, of course. But, please, even then, check with the group first. What transpires in this room is our main focus.'

'It's also important to realise,' interjected Jake, 'that Emma and I are part of this group as well and must abide by its guidelines and participate to the full. We're only facilitators, albeit with a lot of experience, and most definitely not teachers or leaders. I personally get a great deal out of these sessions as a participant. How about you, Emma?'

'Yes, me too. It's like peeling away layers of an onion. Sometimes there seems to be no end to what I can learn about myself and what makes me tick and why. Now, before we start, are there any questions?'

A young man asked, 'Don't get me wrong, I'm committed to this weekend, but deep down, and speaking as a helper, I'm still not really sure why we're doing it. I mean, isn't

the latihan all about developing ourselves? Why do we need more?’

A few of us nodded agreement.

Emma turned to Jake. ‘Could you answer that?’

‘Sure. How many of us are helpers?’

Most of the group indicated we were.

‘In the role of helper, you’ll often be approached by people, either individually, or as one half of a couple — and sometimes even a committee — with issues they simply can’t resolve, or decisions they can’t, or aren’t, prepared to make in the normal way of the world. As you probably know, in mainstream Subud, the person with a problem and their helpers group do latihan together and then ask a pre-determined question out loud, standing in a circle, hoping to receive answers and guidance from an internal, yet external, agency they refer to collectively as “Almighty God” — a process introduced into Subud by Bapak back in the early sixties initially as a development of his “testing how far our latihan had developed” and subsequently as a way to obtain the guidance we were unable to get through our latihan. Personally, I don’t think he realised how deleterious this technique would be to Subud’s growth, or how members would grab at it as a “crystal ball”. You can imagine the disasters that followed from those acting on the “receivings” to questions like, should x leave his job, should y stay married to her husband, should the committee buy a new tea pot and so on. Even at Wayward in the early days before we developed our current system, all helpers could do was suggest that people frame the question in their own mind before starting latihan and hope the process threw some light on the problem. But there was always a sense that something was missing, that another dimension was needed. That dimension was getting to the bottom of why the questions were being asked in the first place. That’s why, in a nutshell, a group of us decided to start these courses. Anything to add, Emma?’

‘It’s a well-documented phenomenon in counselling that the presenting problem is most often only the tip of an iceberg and only loosely connected to the real, underlying issue. “Everything is about something else,” someone once said.’

‘So, in Jake’s example of the man wanting to know if he should leave his job, he may really need to know how to handle a bullying boss, discovering in the process that he is reacting exactly as his four-year-old self reacted to, say, an overbearing father...’

‘Not sure I’d like to be told something like that out of the blue,’ I volunteered. ‘I’d probably walk out...’

‘It’s just an example, Ed. I’m not suggesting that helpers become armchair psychotherapists — anyway, in therapy most insights are valueless unless they’re realised by the clients themselves — more “showing” than “telling”. One of the aims of this type of weekend is to enable individuals to become aware of their real motivators — the prejudices, past relational experiences, cultural baggage and patterns that govern responses to situations and relationships. It seems to me that to be of any value to anyone as a helper, it’s essential I have at least the awareness of how I personally function at that inner level.’

'Maybe, when the time's right we could all talk about why you'd "walk out", for example.'

I began to get quite nervous about this and asked, 'You mean this is going to be a kind of psychotherapy group? We didn't come here to get into deep personal stuff, did we?'

'Could you use "I", please?' said Jake.

'Sure,' I said, feeling a whiff of irritation at being reprimanded in front of the rest of the group. 'But I don't quite see why that's so important...'

'Is there anyone else in the group who didn't come here "to get into personal stuff", as Ed called it?' Jake asked.

The group shook their heads. 'Okay, okay, I get it,' I jumped in trying to regain the group respect I felt I'd lost. 'I didn't come here to get into deep personal stuff...'

'Well, although we'll be using some therapeutic techniques that Jake and I may suggest out of experience, mainly to get things moving, this is not therapy per se,' Emma replied. 'And it's totally up to each of you how far you go in revealing "deep stuff" — as long as you feel you're being honest and true to yourself at all times, that's all that matters usually.'

'But you're both professional therapists,' I said. 'How can you not create a therapeutic atmosphere?'

'True,' Emma replied. 'Jake trained as a therapist at University — it was his vocation; I trained later, after attending a session like this, actually. But on this course, Jake and I are just like you, members of this group and, beyond hoping each of us understands something about ourselves not appreciated before by the end of the course, we have no investment in its outcome, neither do we have a structure or a plan of action. I hope we, as a group, decide where we're going and what we want to address. I could call it 'Brief Therapy' — it has similar overtones. As a group, we'll be focusing on any individual problems that arise, making interventions, if appropriate and welcomed, as well as asking for a suspension of deeply held beliefs in order to consider other, multiple viewpoints and so on. So, you could say that, in a way, each of us is going to be one another's "therapist".'

'How are you feeling right now, Ed?' asked Jake.

'Okay,' I replied. 'Why?'

'Your brow is furrowed and you're sitting kind of hunched up, arms and legs crossed, and I wondered if you're feeling at all uncomfortable?'

I realised Jake was right — I was sitting tense and screwed up — and decided, as I was there anyway, I'd be honest and play along for now. 'Well, I have to admit that being pulled up in front of the group, for "doing something wrong", makes me feel like you all think I'm sort of the class idiot...'

'Anyone feel Ed's done something wrong?' asked Jake.

Head shaking and No's all round. One lady said, 'Actually, I'm glad Ed asked the question first — it's usually me who plunges in, gets it wrong and ends up feeling the fool...'

I was truly taken aback by this exchange. I'd always thought this little foible of mine was unique to me, and I know it had caused me endless problems in the past at both work and home. I know I have a reputation for being a bit touchy, of having a 'short fuse', or so my wife tells me. I'd always preferred to call it being 'sensitive'.

Over the next hour, until we broke for dinner, group members opened up more, each revealing how they had problems with criticism, how they often overreacted, and then describing the strategies they employed to redress the balance if they felt they had 'lost face'. It was a revelation, and I felt myself warming to this group of 'Honest Joes' (and felt a little pleased with myself for instigating the discussion).

Jake in particular took my breath away when he told us how, when criticised in the past, he used to fly into a rage, wanting to hurt or get back at people, as he strived to feel 'equal' again. He said it was like a spectre, haunting him, and it took him years to realise it was a direct result of his upbringing and family culture.

'It played out like a feelings film show that switched on, unbidden, at that moment. In my family there was always a demand for perfection and if it couldn't be lived up to, I was made to feel a pathetic failure — or rather that's how I perceived it. So my reaction to criticism had little to do with what was actually happening in the moment. It was just the trigger. I was really fighting the self-created ghosts of my parents I'd firmly established in my mind like a pair of eternal, finger-wagging critics. That childlike construct blocked any appropriate, adult response, so I lashed out in anger, attempting to dig myself out of the imaginary pit of self-loathing I'd thrown myself into. I was a nightmare to deal with.'

Emma then announced that it was time for dinner, and that we would reconvene at 9 a.m. Saturday, reminding us to keep a record of any dreams we had for possible sharing later. A good dinner and some interesting conversations in the bar afterwards brought the evening to a pleasant close.

The next day started with a series of exercises. One I found very useful was, on a large sheet of paper we were asked to write 'me' at the centre, then to add, going round the sheet with radiating connecting lines, all our roles in life. Mine consisted of father, husband, brother, son-in-law, Development Director, local team soccer coach, friend, guitarist, Wayward member, Subud helper, citizen and so on (about thirty in all — a lot more than I realised). We were then asked to add three qualifying adjectives to each role. After completion, we shared this information with a partner. The lady I worked with was quick to point out that I'd qualified my work role as 'indifferent', 'surfacey' and 'bored', whereas my role as 'soccer coach' was described as 'enthusiastic', 'motivated' and 'caring'. It drew me up short, realising that for over thirty years I had buried the huge disappointment of not being able to play pro-football, and wondered why I hadn't done a sports degree instead of IT, becoming a football trainer rather than working in a field I had little interest in beyond my salary scale. God, that threw up a lot of stuff and made me very emotional and I brought the subject up during the next group session.

'Why on earth didn't you do what *you* wanted?' a group member asked.

'My Dad convinced me there was no future in being a PE instructor, especially as I was "hobbled", so to speak. So, I just went along with it...'

'Thirty years is a long time to "just go along with it",' another remarked.

'Okay, okay. I guess I was angry at the world,' I retorted, feeling irritation rise.

The botched cartilage operation, I droned on, was down to the fact that my parents were very poor and couldn't afford the highly skilled, specialist surgeons that the pros use. I then found myself getting into political stuff about the haves and have-nots and how difficult it was to pull oneself up and out of a deprived childhood, of how ruled by class England is and so on.

During the silence that followed my rant, our facilitators set us an exercise to draw a picture of our life and our relationships to date using our own shorthand symbols. My picture indicated what I saw as my difficult, deprived childhood, my let-down over my career, my disastrous first marriage with my first daughter very separate, leading up to my present marriage. Here I drew a house outline with myself, my wife and daughters, and our cat, all isolated inside, which felt very comfortable and warm.

All the pictures were pinned up around the room, and we then discussed them one by one, making observations and asking questions. As the session wore on, group members began to open up more and more and our facilitators introduced new, fascinating ideas as circumstances dictated. One lady's drawing symbolised in part how difficult life had been for her with a high-flying, architect husband involved, for some years, on a big Subud project, and how its demise had ruined them financially and almost cost their marriage. An older man in the group said something to the effect of it not really being like that, and think of all the inner benefits and how lovely it must have been, in reality, involved with all the top brass and Bapak's family.... This lady really turned on him and asked how dare he tell her what she was feeling. 'When I say it was difficult, that's exactly what I meant!' she shouted in pique. 'You've got no idea how soul-destroying the politics and blatant corruption were....'

Emma went to the flip chart and described how the 'saviour' (the older man in this case) jumps in to save the 'victim' (the complaining lady) who then becomes the 'persecutor', turning the saviour into the new victim, as had happened exactly before our eyes. (I read later that this is a well-known phenomenon, first documented by Transactional Analysis practitioners, and is a typical, and oft repeated, dynamic between people.)

Later in the day, I asked if I could 'verify' (a technique introduced early on) some strong feelings that I had developed about one of the group members.

'Can I verify something with you?' I asked, turning to the man in question. He nodded agreement. 'I've got a feeling that you don't like me very much,' I suggested (really, I was expecting him to deny it).

'Well, you're right,' he replied, 'I don't. You seem to have such a chip on your shoulder and I just find you very difficult to take. Sorry.' The last word said with a shrug of the shoulders.

'I feel the same,' offered another member of the group, a young woman. 'You've been

going on and on about your “deprived childhood” all day. It’s really beginning to wear me down.’

Other group members commented on how I had spent a lot of the time slagging off my parents and my past and found it all a bit tiresome.

I was stunned. This was all so unfair. ‘How come others can say what they feel and get away with it, not be put under the critical spotlight like this?’ I thought, forgetting that others had been ‘under the spotlight’. ‘They don’t understand how difficult it was for me...’ and so on. The thoughts were whirling in my head and I mentally withdrew from the proceedings, sulking. Luckily, at that moment it was suggested we break for tea, and I felt immediate relief as though I had been ‘saved by the bell’.

After tea, Jake walked into the session room, went up to the flip chart and drew a heart with a big, red ‘X’ over it, then sat back, saying nothing.

It slowly emerged that he and Emma felt the group to be tightly locked and going nowhere. They were throwing down a gauntlet. Where was the block?

I immediately thought that it must be me, that perhaps it was my fault because I was sulking. And then thoughts such as: ‘Was I a closet homosexual?’ ‘Had I been abused as a child?’ ‘What was I repressing?’ churned through my mind.

When we all discussed this later, I discovered that the others had had similar paranoid thoughts rushing around their heads, causing much laughter, which helped me snap out of my sulk. It turned out that there was an, as yet untouched on, long-standing bitterness between two of the group members, both of whom had chaired a Property Group committee consecutively a few years back. He felt he had handed over a viable location complete with architectural plans for developing it into a fine group property, and that his successor had ditched ‘his’ project, finding an alternative, and he suspected her of doing it to get all the glory for herself. She claimed that if she hadn’t got lawyers involved, the group could have lost all their money, because the property he’d found was not unencumbered, and that basically he and his committee hadn’t thought it through properly and she felt he ought to at least be grateful that she had ‘saved his reputation’.

‘You made me so angry,’ he told her, ‘when you scrapped my project without consultation — and for your own ends.’

‘And you really hurt me when you accused me of acting out of self-interest,’ she replied. ‘It was so disrespectful of you...’

Voices were beginning to be raised, and you could feel the acrimony in the air.

I thought we, as a group, handled the situation well. By now, it was group members asking, ‘How does that accusation make you feel?’ attempting to get the combatants onto neutral ground, but Emma then made an intervention and introduced the concept of the ‘I-message’.

The I-message is a specialised communication technique that is often used to help resolve conflicts. When a person uses an I-message, he or she ‘owns’, or takes responsibility for, their communication. It clarifies and accentuates the personal

significance that the speaker places upon the topic and avoids the blaming or criticising tone of 'you-messages' such as, 'You made me angry when you scrapped my project for your own ends,' and 'You hurt me when you accused me of self-interest'.

Emma suggested the I-messages might take the form: 'I felt angered when I wasn't consulted about my project being scrapped and I assumed it was done out of self interest.' And, 'I felt very hurt when I was accused of self-interest instead of being thanked for saving the group a fortune.' Thus the significance of the result of the actions for each could be shown to the other without their bristling at accusations and therefore failing to listen to the other viewpoint. Emma then gave each the opportunity to respond to the I-message, reflecting back their individual responses, allowing for subtle elaboration until each could validate their understanding of what had transpired for the other.

I witnessed a 'scales dropping from the eyes' in both of them and a true understanding of each other's position grow, the long-standing feud culminating in mutual understanding, acceptance and a moving, totally forgiving embrace.

That evening, we all did latihan in adjacent rooms in the hotel. During the half hour, the day's events were being churned over in my mind. As I attempted to separate from this maelstrom of thoughts and feelings, I experienced, welling up from inside, a flood of, how can I describe it? Love? Understanding? Forgiveness? Or are they all the same thing? For the first time I saw my parents and my first wife struggling to do their best under the weight of their own upbringings and damage. I saw clearly the legacy I had left for my eldest daughter of having no natural father to relate to, because I had failed in my first marriage. And I saw myself striving to do my best and get it right, but making cack-handed mistakes left right and centre.

After, feeling quite tearful and vulnerable, I went to bed instead of the bar. Before dawn I had a dream. I was walking through a shopping Mall, past a beautiful fountain at the centre of a flower garden, which was being tended by the whole group, and I waved as I walked past, and they all waved back, smiling and laughing. I then went into an antique shop and began to browse, finding delightful objets d'art and stunning pieces of furniture. And then I awoke, feeling very emotionally raw, choked up and on the verge of tears — most unusual for me.

First thing Sunday morning, as we sat quietly waiting to see what the day would bring, I related my dream to the group, and Jake then introduced the idea that everything in a dream is a symbol of, or represents, an aspect of ourselves.

'Sleep is a lower level of consciousness, so our dreams are always a reflection of how we live out, and how we are in our waking lives — our "private logic" in other words,' he said. Then he turned to me and asked, 'So, what do antiques mean to you?'

'Er, well, they're beautiful things from the past,' I offered. And then something clicked.

'Beautiful things from the past... Yes!' I said and got up and walked over to my picture of my life and relationships, which was pinned on the wall alongside the others' drawings. I explained how I had been feeling to the group and what I had experienced in the latihan. I took a big red pen and said, 'I really need to do this,' and I began to draw a house shape around *all* of the characters and relationships, making them a unity. This is the

astonishing thing — as I drew, feelings of love and contrition and forgiveness and understanding and forbearance and joy and nostalgia and... you name it, washed over me in wave after wave of heart-wracking emotion as I repeatedly drew the house over and over again. A floodgate had been opened. Tears were pouring down my cheeks and I cried out, 'This feels so good!'

Emma stood and gently led me to a chair, placing another, empty chair opposite me. I was in a semi-trance-like state by his time. 'What do you want to tell your father?' she asked me in a whisper.

'That I was angry and blamed him for what happened...', I think I managed to say.

'Tell him. He's in front of you. Tell him.' And I did, pulling no punches.

Emma then gently moved me to the other chair and asked me to be my father and to respond. Sitting on that chair, I actually became my father, his cockney accent, his way of sitting, everything.

'I'm sorry, son,' my 'father' replied. 'We did our best. Thought we was doing the right f'ing. It was a bad time for us, too. Yer accident worried me and yer Mum 'alf to deff.' And he told me how proud of me he was and how much he loved me and that everything was all right between us now. That's what I needed to hear and know!

I repeated the exercise with my mother and then estranged daughter from my first marriage. I remember my daughter 'saying' to me, 'Why are you so worried about me? You survived, why shouldn't I?'

Then it was over and I was asked to approach each member of the group to be embraced. I remember so clearly that as one man, whom I had tremendous respect for, hugged me, he whispered in my ear, 'That's brave, man!' I was so moved and touched by that remark that I burst into tears again.

As the rest of the day wore on, one by one, each member of the group experienced a similar catharsis, the last two to do so through the medium of beating hell out of cushions and an armchair.

The final exercise introduced was 'Family Constellations' and was all about our birth order. From what I remember, the 'rule of thumb' guidelines stated that eldest children start off as the 'apple of their parents eyes', but then feel 'dethroned' when a sibling comes along. They are often 'highly responsible' people as they may be told by their mothers to look after the youngest while they go shopping, for example. This new-born, second child, however, has a 'pacemaker' ahead who must be caught up with, in terms of achievement, and even 'overtaken' (if allowed by the eldest) — thus causing what could develop into a lifelong battle. The youngest child is often 'the baby of the family' and 'lives by their charm'. Sometimes the youngests will 'go their own way', different to the family. The only child (the lonely only) often has difficulties with peer group relationships and may confuse 'onlyness' with 'uniqueness' and become quite demanding, often becoming 'stars' if it works out for them — and so on.

'But remember,' Emma said, "It could always be otherwise," to quote Adler, whose construct this concept is based upon.'

The group divided into 'eldests' (three of us, including me), 'middles' (three), 'youngests' (two), 'onlys' (also two) and swapped life experiences.

When we reported back to the main group, I was able, when it came to my turn, to relate a remarkable discovery. I'd remembered incidents where I had been 'thrown out' of a gang when I was a kid, of being asked to leave a band when a teenager and a marriage in later life — even my current wife and I being evicted from a Subud House we had care-taken back in the eighties. I then realised that this pattern of 'being dethroned', of having a special status 'taken away' has somehow dominated my life — and I made the connection big-time with my sports injury and my promising career being 'taken away' too. And I saw that, even today, just as Jake expressed it, I was still reacting to this 'spectre' from the past, allowing it to rule my emotional life with a constant 'I'm not good enough and life is so unfair' background drone. The questions left hanging for me were: how much do I contribute to this life pattern and to what degree do I create situations that will 'self-fulfil the prophecy'?

The others all had similar breakthroughs in understanding, but the one that made us all laugh good-naturedly was from a young lady, an only child, who had thrown a wobbly on the first night because she wanted to phone her boyfriend and was told she shouldn't.

'I'm afraid I did make the call in my room, because I just thought, well, all the others are married, I'm the only single here, my situation is unique!'

Then we were asked to go back to our original 'commitment' sheets and re-evaluate. This time, I scored it ten out of ten. Something had begun to shift for me....

In winding up, Jake and Emma suggested that if any of us wanted to take anything further, they would recommend counsellors or therapists to us and I surprised everyone by saying that I'd like to take them up on that offer. They then asked us to each give the group a resume of what we thought we had learned from the course. Mine went something like the following:

'I realise now how useless were the old style "testing" and attempts on my part to "receive" guidance to my own problems and to try to advise or guide others towards solutions to theirs. Although I believed I was being sincere at the time, even testing with someone the innocuous "What should your attitude be...", my not having any understanding of what drives and motivates me personally, let alone the other, is like trying to build a sea wall out of the sea. It's as if there's a whole dimension missing. The latihan doesn't give me the answers on a plate, but it does open the doors to understanding. It's up to me to go through the doors and to 'get down and dirty' with all my assumptions, suppositions and belief systems. I have to make the changes, but can only begin when I am aware of what needs to be changed. It's as though my life is like standing on a chessboard where I can see all the squares, except the one I'm standing on. This course has enabled me to see at least the edges of that square....'

I left the hotel with a softness and an ease within myself that I'd never felt before. I had laid myself bare in front of others, revealing my vulnerability and my weaknesses and had not been rejected. I had allowed myself to be accepted and loved for who I am, in turn enabling me to 'love myself' more. That this was possible was such a revelation to me and I've come away a much wiser person — and, because I realise this is only the

first layer of the onion, I've signed up with a therapist for twenty-four sessions over the next six months!

Not long after the course, I was reading the *Times Online*, my only way of keeping in touch with my Englishness, when I read the following in an article written by the formidable Bryan Appleyard about a new play, 'Polar Bears', from the pen of Mark Haddon (author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*). The play is ostensibly about Bi-Polar Disorder, as his *Curious Incident* novel was ostensibly about Autism.

Appleyard writes: 'So what attracted him to mental disorder? "The same as what attracts me to any subject, whether it's Peterborough, the poetry of Horace, dogs, space travel... They're doors to the deep stuff and the deep stuff is much more important than the doors."'

I did a mental double take when I read that, immediately connecting it with what I had discovered on the course and the state of Subud today. Group premises, enterprise, Congresses, Bapak and Ibu's talks, Susila Budhi Dharma, religion, Ramadan, — they're all 'doors', or ways into the 'deep stuff', the stuff that keeps us un-whole and locked into our patterns of behaviour. Unfortunately, wherever I look in Subud today, I see people hung up on doors, just like I was for so many years. We're standing there, admiring the way they're made, the woodwork, the locks and handles, instead of going through to the deep stuff beyond — something most of us joined Subud for in the first place, but have somehow forgotten.

*Wayward. See the story by Michael Irwin in *Subud Vision*, April, 2010.