



## Becoming Real

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BHcare provides services to young adults, ages 18 to 25 years old, most, but not all of whom, have had many years in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF). There are many paths that lead to care by DCF, but the bulk of clients wind up there because circumstances were such that, their parents were not able for one reason or another, to raise them and they were given over to the care of DCF to try and raise them. DCF for its part would try and place them with relatives, or if relatives were not available they would then enter the foster care system. Many of the young adults we provide services to have developed emotional or psychiatric conditions, in part from the experience of having been given up by their families before they had time to fully develop the emotional and psychological underpinnings necessary to succeed in the world. Our role in Young Adult Services for clients with these issues is to try and help them both identify and understand how these experiences have and do impact them, and how to resume the process of recovery and growth that have gotten stalled along the way. We attempt to help get this process moving again by a combination of help with case management, housing, medical care, individual and group therapy, vocational counseling and support, resumption of interrupted schooling; linkages with higher education, and psychiatric medication management where indicated.

When normal development is interrupted there are consequences. The process of development can be interrupted all along the way. The age that the interruption occurs often dictates the symptoms that one will experience, in conjunction with whatever is the family psychiatric history, and whether or not abuse was present as well. Those symptoms run the gamut from mild to severe and may present as depression, anxiety, hallucinations, delusions, mood instability, or substance abuse to name the most common. Another outcome may be a group of conditions we call Personality Disorders. What that really means is that person has not developed a stable, cohesive, positively colored sense of themselves. Self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence are unstable and good feelings can be easily undermined by others withdrawal from them, by losses, criticism, rejection or lack of respect, with a rapid loss of those feelings and replacement by bad feelings or no feelings at all. When these things occur, mood, thinking, and behaviors may rapidly shift from logical and stable to crisis mode with childlike behaviors and an upsurge of fear, terror, panic, depression, complete withdrawal, and sometimes brief psychosis. Gifted, sensitive writers and poets have intuitively understood this since the beginning of time. When you closely read their works and let it sink into your own experience there is an awakening and kinship, and you feel less alone. It is that feeling of being less alone, that someone else has an understanding of what you have experienced, that is the key to resuming the process of growth, especially when it is linked with true caring by the other person. I was recently working with a student and I was attempting to explain to her about how personality disorders come about and how people get better and I thought of a children's book, "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams. It is the story of a stuffed rabbit, that is a young boy's favorite toy. The rabbit wants to become real and be like other rabbits, able to move, jump, hop, run but he can't because he is stuffed, not real. I won't ruin the story for you, but over time through love and caring he becomes real. A few quotes from the book "Real isn't how you are made. It's a thing that happens to you." and "but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always." There is no one way to get better, there are many. Find your way, we will try to help.