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Miracle Behaviours: a Rapport special issue

Michael King, Guest Editor

In this feature section of *Rapport*, we highlight "miracle behaviours", Psychology's necessary answer to the craving for the latest miracle drug or medical quick fix. Miracle behaviours are those simple things that people can *do*, like exercising for 60 minutes a week, doing relaxation for 20 minutes a day, or even participating in psychotherapy for about an hour a week, that can produce dramatic improvements in their health and well being. The evidence is accumulating that we have not even begun to explore, much less push, the envelope of what we can do for people's health problems with these psychological methods. Psychological interventions for anxiety, depression, habit change, lifestyle modification, and a host of other high impact health problems are effective, robust, and promote durable change. For many health problems, the magic bullet may be behavioural rather than pharmacological. This is what we should be selling.

But we still cower before the juggernaut of acute care medicine and its pharmacopeia. We apologize for our puny methods and even hunger for the right to play with the big kids' toys: medication. Or we grope for the latest flavour-of-the-week systemic-holistic-Oprah certified-New Age intervention, and get further away from Psychology down another cul-de-sac.

As Listees of the Canadian Register, we have all declared and proven ourselves health service providers. We want to see psychologists using their health care skills and validated methods to do what they can do uniquely well. Ted Morris, recently retired as a member of the Register's Executive, captured our imaginations with his vision of "In Your Face" Psychology. He related the advice that his daughter's hockey coach imparted to his players: "Every time they (the other players) turn around, you be *there*". We want psychologists to start practising "In Your Face" Psychology. Psychologists need to be there, individually and collectively, wherever there's a need for our behavioural expertise. Whenever someone turns around, we should be *there*, with those miracle behaviours.

In the following pages, you will read about some innovative ideas for getting people to choose and use miracle behaviours to improve their health. These are illustrations of what we can do and do not exhaust all the potential areas in which we may bring our psychological skills to bear on health problems that people want to solve. Ted Morris sets out some of the paradoxes of population health that psychology may be able to address. Rob Nolan describes creative programs for dealing with "readiness for change". Ellen Burgess talks about an exciting program that Parke-Davis

Pharmaceuticals has just launched to bring psychological methods to bear on the problem of treatment adherence among hypertensive patients. Finally, a brief bibliography is appended for those who want to find out more about trans-theoretical approaches to getting people to adopt these miracle behaviours in their lives.