

Partnership?

Nov. 12 /97

"Partnership" is the big catch-word in the mental health system these days.

It's all through the cornerstone and vision statements. It is apparently key in new closer to home philosophy, part of the responsive interactive government strategy.

When the institutions profess partnership as their goal and ideal and don't practice it, they engender a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in those of us who are apparently meant to be empowered by them.

From my perspective, as a very active, involved consumer, it feels like the very opposite of "partnership". There is little informal, low key encouragement of consumer initiatives. It's a lonely and unsupportive atmosphere in a situation where most involvement is voluntary.

I've been told that the system has "no energy or time/resources to respond to what you're doing. Don't expect it". No feedback is a negative response. I get feedback from my audience at Movie Monday but almost none from the other so-called partners. I've asked for it - (eg. 3 years ago, zip) - you can't keep asking.

I keep watching for signs. I gladly participate in partnerships when there's an opportunity. You draw conclusions on actual response - the rhetoric sounds ironic after that.....Is any body listening???

Many capable people who could respond constructively are similarly estranged.

I drove around with a scrap of paper on my dash that said, "*Ask not what the system can do for you, but what you can do for the system.*" That kind of enthusiasm seems ironic when the system doesn't respond. Is any one listening? I asked that question two years ago.

- x Partnership problems Nov. 95
- x Partner Participation Nov.95
- x Lenny Jan.96

Files on Tokenism

(Presented to Anne Bowles, Jill Thomas, and David Butler with Ingrid Olson Mercer Nov.12/97)