

31st October 2024

Treatment

"A suitable case for treatment."

David Mercer, *Title of BBC TV Play (1966)*

On Halloween, the "treat" part of "Trick or Treat" is on my mind ...

In Treatment was a US TV drama from 2008 about a psychotherapist, Dr Paul Weston, and his weekly sessions with patients. In an early episode, there's this exchange between Dr Weston and a patient.

Paul: What happened last night?

Laura: Well, what didn't happen?

The long version or the bottom line?

Because the bottom line is very simple.

My life is over.

Paul: Then, you'd better tell me the long version.

It doesn't matter here what the events of "last night" were about. But I've been reflecting on how much Dr Weston's approach to his client's needs resonates with me. In order to find a relevant treatment, he has to get the *whole* picture, understand the person he's dealing with, and that begins by listening to "the long version". Here is one person – who happens to be a health-care professional – seeking to understand another person – who happens to be going through some kind of crisis. And, to engage fully with her needs, to ascertain what the appropriate treatment might be, Dr Weston has to listen and understand, *before* they work together on what might be the best way forward.

One of the phrases we used regularly in the Marie Curie hospice – and now as I help people explore bereavement issues – suggested we had to "To enter into the world people are inhabiting". We can't, or shouldn't, make assumptions, unless we have the whole story. We can't get the whole story, unless we're prepared to listen. We can't listen completely, unless we give someone time. And that time is best spent being fully engaged with the world, and the circumstances, in which people find themselves.

Treating each other in ways that matter, working out what's appropriate and what isn't, is about "the whole story", getting a complete picture. After all, don't *we* like to be treated as a whole person, rather than by the assumptions people might make of us?

A prayer for today

Lord, let my treatment of others reflect the ways I would like to be treated. Amen

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