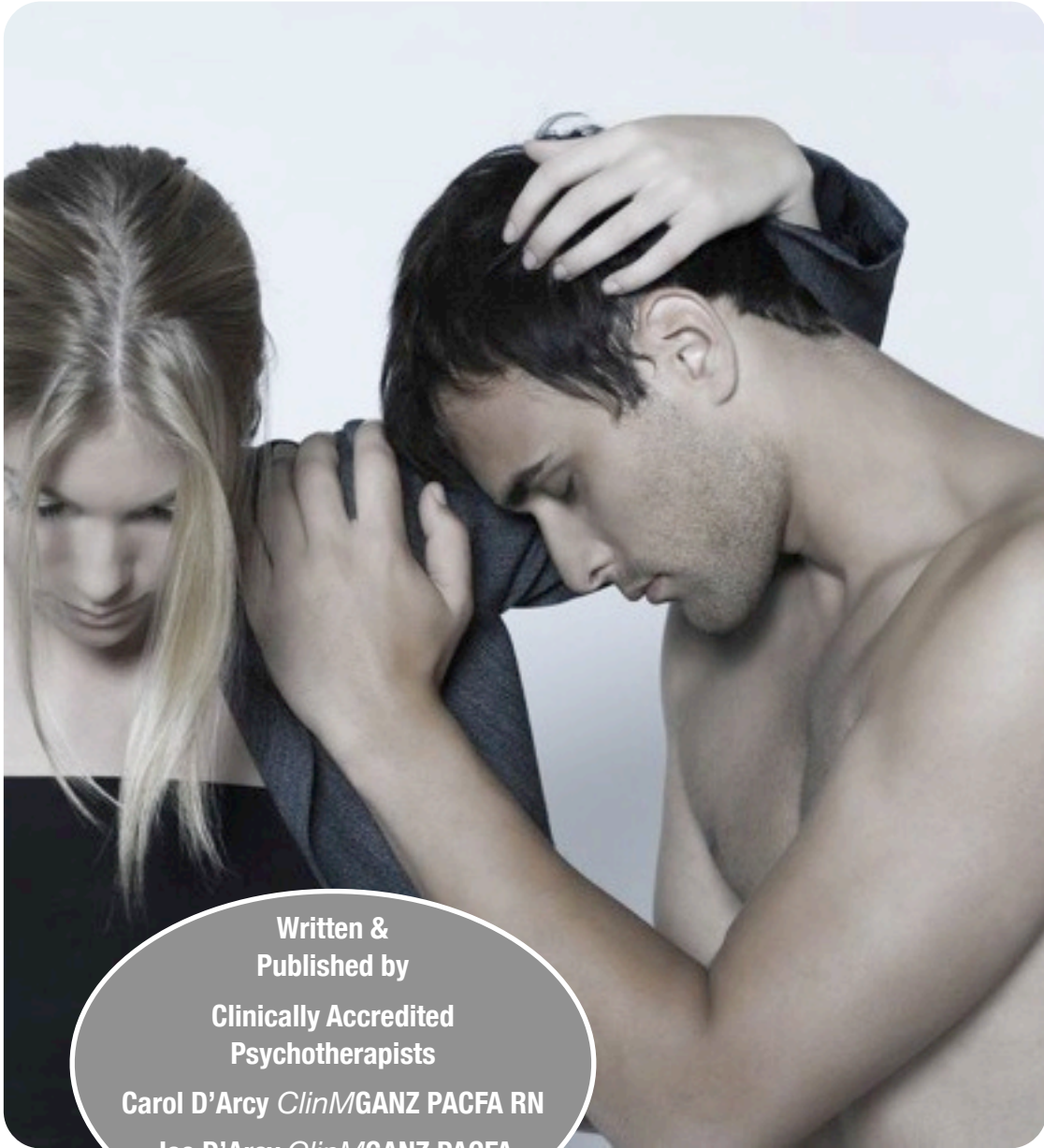


THE EMPTY CHAIR



Written & Published by
Clinically Accredited Psychotherapists
Carol D'Arcy ClinMGANZ PACFA RN
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This EDITION In this weeks publication we will go back to basics and explore how power struggles play a definitive role in many of our lives. We also look at how power struggles not only interfere with many of our intimate relationships but how 'power struggle' sometimes replaces our intimate relationships.



Issue 1



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The Empty Chair

**Published by:
Joe and Carol D'Arcy**

We hope that what we have to offer is of benefit to you and assists you to lead an enriched and fulfilling life.

Our publication reflects what we have learnt through: our teachers, 20 years of daily Clinical experience with our clients, many years of attending counselling and psychotherapy ourselves and 26 years of a fulfilling relationship together.

We do not profess to have all the answers nor are our responses a summation of all that is available on various subjects.

For more info on Joe and Carol D'Arcy see Page 14

THE EMPTY CHAIR

PUBLISHED FORTNIGHTLY

Relationships
Power struggles
Intimacy
Empty Chair Cartoon
Weekly experiment
Online feedback

Clinically Accredited
Psychotherapists

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RELATIONSHIPS - 'GETTING BACK TO BASICS' PART 1

Some people are fortunate enough to be able to 'go back to the basics' when it comes to getting their relationship on track whereas many others have never learnt the basics of relationship.

DEALING WITH POWER STRUGGLES

In our Practice we regularly meet couples who once loved each other deeply. When these same couples present for relationship counselling, they are often only one more argument away from ending their relationship *forever*.

How do two people who were once so close, who once possessed such love for each other, end up with such contempt or indifference toward each other?

How can this happen to two people who are determined to work hard at relating to each other?

Power struggle as a way of life.

Many couples have very little experience in healthy communication. For many couples, 'power struggle' is a way of life. Many couples do not know how to negotiate conflict and so as a result, battle it out with each other. Other couples, polarise this approach to conflict and spend a good deal of the time being 'too nice' to each other and avoiding conflict.

In the long term these polarised approaches to conflict are ineffective at maintaining the relationship.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Relationship is the foundation of all life.

In our publication we refer to two partners to describe relationship. However, relationship describes all forms of relationship including relationship with self, partner, friends, family, gay, employer-employee, etc.

Rather than drive you to distraction with endless inclusions of all forms of relationship combination, we will use the term partner in most cases to define relationship.

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RELATIONSHIP OR MANIPULATIONSHIP

What stands in the way of you and Intimacy?

If you want a successful intimate relationship you will need to consider what it actually means to relate.

If you do not express your feelings, needs and wants then how do you communicate with your partner? The most likely means of communication is through manipulation.

Although the word 'manipulationship' does not exist in the English Dictionary, 'manipulationship' best describes the most common form of relationship that exists in our culture.

For some people, to simply state what they want or need is like speaking a foreign language. The only way many people get what they want is through manipulation.

Manipulation in most relationships, is not intended to be malicious, it is intended to assist a person to get what they want.

eg. If your partner is in the kitchen and you state in a casual manner, "I could do with a coffee." This statement is not intended to harm, nor is it destructive in any way. It is more than likely intended to illicit a response along the lines of, "Would you like me to make you a cup?" This is a harmless form of

manipulation that relationships often function on.

Similarly, another example: if a man is feeling amorous and decides to uncharacteristically cook the dinner and help out with the kids in the hope of winning his wife's sexual attention. This is also a form of manipulation that is, once again, a relatively harmless and acceptable manipulation common in many relationships.

In that case is manipulation OK if both partners agree?

Manipulation in a relationship can be OK if you both agree on it. Having said that, manipulation is a form of 'control' where a strategy is used to control the outcome, rather than a direct statement of want or need. Manipulation/control is the fuel of 'power struggles.'

Although manipulation can be agreed upon by couples, more than likely, over time, the relationship will be at a stalemate due to the ensuing power struggles.

The majority of relationships that find their way to Relationship Counselling in our Centre are plagued by power struggles that were, initially, relatively harmless interactions. Unchecked, over time, these interactions escalated into painful and destructive power struggles.

POWER STRUGGLES



For some couples, power struggles are a way of life.

What is the formula for the ideal Relationship?

There is no formula for the ideal relationship. A relationship is formed around the agreements of both partners in the context of the community in which they live. i.e. Whatever the partners agree upon is OK, as long as it does not bring harm to either partner or harm to the community in which they live.

The most effective way to end your relationship is with power struggle.

Power struggles are by their nature, escalating. Although the origins of power struggle are often harmless, where they end is heartbreaking.

All Power struggles end in death

Power struggles end in death. In our modern culture that often translates to a metaphorical death. i.e. where the person you have been struggling with, does not exist in your life any more. You have metaphorically 'killed them off.' And so people who were once very close to us, no longer exist in our hearts or our thoughts.

Occasionally, people who once loved each other, actually kill each other and end up in prison. Although this does happen, in our cultured society, most people leave the killing of their partner up to their lawyer. Given that the process of law is power struggle, based on precedent, your partner will be neatly and effectively killed off with legally justifiable means. (An unforeseeable journey from that blissful, "I do")

There are no winners in power struggles.

By the time a power struggle is finished, both partners are either destroyed or deeply scarred. If there are children involved, many of them will be scarred for a good part of their lives as a result of being amongst this destructive relationship dynamic. And as you may know, children learn how to be in

relationship from what they experience as they grow up.

So lets go back to manipulation as a way of getting what you want in your relationship.

Although relatively harmless manipulation may be OK (as earlier discussed), and can be agreed upon in the short term for your relationship, given that manipulation is the fuel of power struggle, do you really want to risk it?

So how does a relationship transform from orgasmic love to ultimate destruction.

There are 3 simple steps from orgasmic love to death.

STEP1) Couples who do not express themselves intimately i.e. If you not express how you feel, what you need and what you want-you will, initially, use basic and somewhat harmless manipulation as a form of communication.

STEP2) Manipulative communication will fuel a power struggle.

STEP3) Power struggles escalate and end in death.

Is it really that simple and evident?

Destruction one step at a time

The destructiveness of a power struggle is not often clearly evident. The process is usually experienced in 'small degrees of tolerance'. i.e. each person demonstrates a willingness to tolerate the struggle one step at a time. This power dynamic is familiar (as in familiar to your family of origin). On one hand, you will not like some aspects of the struggle, on the other hand, you will feel right at home with it. Given that this destructive dynamic is familiar and we are constantly drawn to the familiar, it is possible that you may feel that you are more able to function in a relationship with a power struggle dynamic than you are able to function in a relationship that promotes intimate communication. Power struggle may be the only way you know how to feel close.

Many people are often blind to the scars of their power struggles because in turn, as you top your partner, you experience degrees of satisfaction from your 'little win'. You may even experience a slight (power) intoxication from the feeling of power that comes with your win. Why would you give that up?

MAKING YOUR POINT



"I don't mean to butt heads with you, I'm just trying to make a point."

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You can be 'Nice' for only a limited time.

If you find that your approach to relationships is to be eternally nice then you will find that over time you are like a ticking time bomb. You can be nice for only a limited time. Unexpressed emotion does not go away and in order for you to attain balance as a human being (homeostasis), you will need to express how you feel.

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Emotions are, ideally, expressed on a regular basis.

If you put a lid on your feelings or repress what you feel, imagining or hoping the uncomfortable feelings will all just go away, you will eventually 'blow your stack' 'flip your lid' 'lose it' etc. and release it all in one big conflict. Emotions are, ideally, expressed on a regular basis rather than in one hit. Alternatively, if you don't express how you feel you may slowly sink into a long term depression.

For some couples, power struggle is the only way they know how to feel close.

Having gradually built up resentment, only to finally explode, some couples feel when they rip shreds off each other, peeling away all the 'nice' exteriors in emotional battle or sometimes, physical battle, that this is the only way to 'feel close' to each other.

How do you stop someone from engaging in a power struggle with you?

You can't stop someone from engaging in a power struggle. However, there are ways to not participate in the struggle. As you know, you can't change others (it is hard enough to change yourself). Your active participation in a power struggle, in most cases, is determined by your response.



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Power struggles require 'fuel'

A person participating in a power struggle is often driven by an experience of powerlessness, where they perceive a loss of power. The power struggle is a grab for power - '*your power*'. The 'fuel' for a power struggle comes from active participation in the struggle, where one person feeds on the power of the other or both parties feed off each other. The power struggle continues to escalate until one member or both members are 'killed off'. The 'killing off' of the other is either a metaphorical death, a spiritual, emotional or physical death.

The person involved in the power struggle with you will move on, soon enough, if they cannot 'fill their tank' with your power due to your non-participation.



Power struggles require 'fuel.'

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What if you want to engage in the struggle?

It is very tempting to participate in a power struggle; when we are provoked, if we feel we have been wronged or if we just want to prove a point. Given that power struggles end in death, do you really want to participate?

Does that mean I become a doormat to aggressive people?

Disengaging from a power struggle, does not mean becoming a doormat to aggressive people. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Disengaging means walking away and not participating in the struggle. If you engage in a power struggle you can guarantee that you will be 'walked all over' at sometime and you will also do some 'walking over' as well.

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Relating to those who have a preference for struggles

If you are in relationship as a partner, employee or friend with someone who prefers power struggle as a form of communication on an ongoing basis you will then need to ask yourself whether you wish to maintain this relationship.

As a couple, you may consider 'relationship counselling' as a way to explore other ways to communicate.

Some couples unwittingly prefer power struggles as a 'resource' to avoid experiencing intimacy. As much as intimacy is desired it also terrifies many people.*

How do you avoid participating in a power struggle?

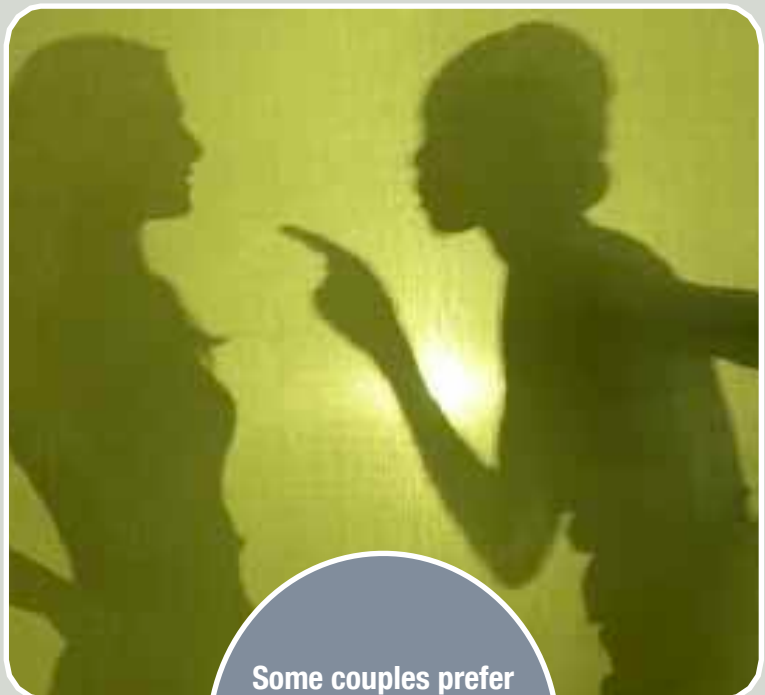
If all power struggles do end in death. *i.e. death of the friendship, death of relationship etc.* Do you really want to engage in them? If you are in a power struggle, who is going to stop the power struggle from escalating? Will it be you, or are you relying on the person who has no idea that they are engaging in the power struggle with you? Do you insist on being right? Do you tell yourself, it is the other person's fault that you are in the power struggle in the first place? Do you want to make 'just this one last point.' If not, then take steps to de-escalate and or disengage from the power struggle.

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Gold Coast Gestalt Centre



Some couples prefer power struggles in order to avoid their fear of intimacy

Joe D'Arcy

* **'The Language of Intimacy'** will be explored in depth in Issue 2 of 'The Empty Chair'

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DISENGAGEMENT AND DE-ESCALATION

De-escalate the struggle to fight to the death in disengage from the power support of your justifiable struggle.

To de-escalate a power position?

struggle, one of the

participants must be aware

that they are either about to

engage in, or are currently

engaging in a power struggle.

If you are *aware* that you are

in a struggle, then you are in

a position to take some

responsibility and not 'fuel'

the struggle, even if you are

certain that it is the other

person's fault. Who started

the conflict is irrelevant. Do

you want to win the conflict or

do you want a fulfilling

relationship? Do you want to

find a way to love another

human being or do you want

If you are willing to listen

and hear from the other

person without a counter

argument you will go a long

way to ceasing the power

struggle. If you are willing to

apologise for your part in the

struggle etc you will also

contribute greatly to a de-

escalation of the struggle.

If you are 'too far gone' in

the conflict and wouldn't

dream of listening or

apologising then a workable

solution to the conflict is to

fuel the struggle).

Disengage from the struggle

In most cases you can

disengage from the power

struggle by ending the

conversation, walking away,

hanging up the phone etc. Put

simply, a physical boundary

that you put in place with a

primary purpose to support

and protect yourself from

engaging in further conflict.

(A physical boundary is not

designed to punish or teach

the other person a lesson-as

these unspoken or spoken

behaviours will only further

fuel the struggle).

Can all power struggles be avoided?

In some cases, a power struggle can't be avoided. eg if you are attacked (as opposed to provoked) on the street, in times of war, in a courtroom. These are power struggles that you are involved in that won't be resolved in intimate relationship or with healthy communication. When this occurs you will need to fully engage in the power struggle.

Given that power struggles end in death, it is important to not enter any power struggle lightly.

However, in actuality, genuine power struggles rarely occur as the first point of call in a conflict, especially with those closest to us. However, (as previously mentioned) unresolved and escalating conflicts often end in life/death battles where the participants are either emotionally, spiritually or physically destroyed.

Fulfilling Relationships

Ultimately in most cases, our fellow human beings, especially our friends and partners, do not wish for our demise, just as we do not wish for theirs.


If we take a moment to respond in a power struggle and de-escalate or disengage from the struggle, then we have the opportunity to work towards the fulfilling relationships that we all desire.

Consider This:

If you are involved in less power struggles (either through your actions, words or thoughts) you will have more time to experience *Intimacy*, *Creativity* and *Adventure*. Which would you prefer to dedicate your time to?

Next Edition:

In Issue 2 of 'The Empty Chair' we will explore, How to create and maintain a fulfilling relationship in Part 2 of '**Relationships-Getting Back to Basics - The Language of Intimacy**'



Do you want to 'win' the conflict or do you want a fulfilling relationship?

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This weeks experiment

Reading and Learning does not create change. You must take action for change to occur.

Theory is relatively easy to grasp, practical application of the theory is more difficult. In this edition of 'The Empty Chair' there has been a lot to consider in relation to power struggles. It is important to chew this information over before you act on it. You will need to consider what information is valuable and what is not. If you believe all that you read without consideration, you will live your life blindly. One effective way to determine whether information is valuable is to experiment. You can decide on many different experiments based on this weeks information. Each week we will suggest one experiment for you to work on.

Change can be a very difficult process. Although the suggested experiment may seem relatively easy, if you are willing to engage in one experiment with each weekly publication, change will occur more rapidly than you can imagine.

As you know, Experience is your best teacher. When you experiment, you experience. This is known as experiential learning. eg Learning to ride a bike in text form is very different to the overall experience of pedaling, balancing, steering, braking and contemplating traffic.

Weekly experiments are suggestions only (try them if you wish).

This weeks experiment is De-escalating a Power Struggle

If all power struggles do end in death. *i.e. death of the friendship, death of relationship etc.* Do you really want to engage in them? If you are in a power struggle, who is going to stop the power struggle from escalating.

In this weeks experiment you will explore taking responsibility for the de-escalation of a power struggle that you find yourself participating in; keep in mind that the more the power struggle escalates, the harder it is to de-escalate.

EXPERIENCE



Experience is the best teacher. When you experiment, you experience.

This week:

Notice a power struggle that you are engaging in and take steps to de-escalate and or disengage from the conflict. If you do this just once this week, you may be doing more than you were doing last week. If you wish to repeat the experiment a number of times then do so.

Be aware of any differences in your experience and also be aware of whether there are any differences in your relationship as a result.

THE EMPTY CHAIR

"THE EMPTY CHAIR"

by Joe & Carol D'Arcy



THANK YOU

To our teachers

Barry Blicharski
Osin Friel
Katerina Loven
Dr (Philip) Groves
Malcolm Pearce
Nara Pearce
Bill Wilson
Kate Ross
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Wendy Ashurst
Annette Cremen
Fr. John Doe
Jazz D'Arcy
Byron D'Arcy
Kamala-Wind in the
Trees D'Arcy
and Our clients

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ONLINE FEEDBACK

We are interested in hearing from you.

Click here for our [Facebook Link](#)



Put your thoughts
and feelings
into words

If you have a question about 'Relationships-Dealing with Power Struggles' or you would simply like to make a comment about this weeks edition then let us know.

If you click on our '[Facebook Link](#)' here or at the top of the page or paste the following link, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Empty-Chair/337729379572009> there will be a weekly publication discussion.

Each fortnight we will write on a new topic. The topic of the next Edition is Relationships-Getting Back to Basics Part 2 - 'The Language of Intimacy' where we will explore a practical and simple step by step process to fulfilling intimate relationships.

Let us know what issues you would like to know about so that each publication is an engaging dialogue. You can remain anonymous if you wish.

Next EDITION

"The Language of Intimacy."

Can you have a successful, long term, intimate relationship without expressing how you feel, what you need or what you want?



In a word. NO. You may have a *long term* relationship but it is unlikely that it will be a *fulfilling* relationship nor will it be an *intimate* relationship.

The language of intimacy combined with honesty and a few basic ground rules will set the foundations for a very successful intimate relationship.

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Gold Coast Gestalt Centre



Photo of Gold Coast Gestalt Centre path

Joe and Carol D'Arcy are dedicated to supporting ordinary people to lead extraordinary and fulfilling lives.

About Joe and Carol D'Arcy

Carol and Joe D'Arcy run a full-time Counselling and Psychotherapy private practice. They are Clinically Accredited Psychotherapists with the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia and have Clinical Accreditation with GANZ. They have been in Clinical practice for 20 years and full-time Private Practice for 16 years as Directors of the Gold Coast Gestalt Centre.

Link: counsellinggoldcoast.com

On a daily basis they engage in:

- *Relationship Counselling
- *Anxiety Counselling
- *Depression Counselling
- *Drug and Alcohol addiction and rehabilitation Counselling
- *Depression Counselling
- *Marriage counselling
- *Eating Disorder Counselling

They also clinically supervise Psychologists, Psychotherapists and Counsellors as well as Psychotherapy teams and Drug and Alcohol

Counselling Units on the Gold Coast and Brisbane regions.

Joe and Carol are parents with two children. Apart from their counselling and psychotherapy practice, they are dedicated to the creative arts.

Carol paints regularly and has artwork hanging throughout the world, (caroldarcy.com) whilst Joe has produced, written and directed film designed to inspire fuller lives, including the award winning film, 'Beauty', and 'No Brainer' an educational drama exploring alcohol use and teenagers.' (joedarcyfilms.com)

At home, they have a dog, cat, horse, four chickens and a small vegetable garden.

Website: counsellinggoldcoast.com

Intimate Possibilities

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