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Change your own life by changing others'

Looking back on his varied and successful business career, Rob Montgomery realised that his life had for some time been veering towards quite a different way of working.

"I was operations manager with a small family-run business," he says. "I became close to the owners and their family, and I found that I was being used more as an advisor about general things, decisions about the kids, about life, so I thought I would get qualified to do that.

"I did a couple of courses, but the one that had the most meaning for me was the Psychotherapy course at Jansen Newman Institute. Now I'm doing my masters there as well."

People who are interested in psychotherapy make for stimulating company, Mr Montgomery found. "The people in the class had strong stories to tell about their lives and backgrounds, real horror stories," he says.

"I felt I hadn't had that, I'd had a tough upbringing, but there were no dramas. A lot of psychotherapists have been there themselves, and they have an ability to relate. To be yourself, to be part of group therapy sessions, opening up, for the first time really, having heart-to-hearts with people you don't really know.

"I was out of my comfort zone for a while, but it soon become part of the way psychotherapy works, person-centred, congruency, being in the moment, I enjoyed it."

Now set up in his own practice, Mr Montgomery's days are never routine. "The people who come to me are generally, and I don't know why, young guys and girls," he says. "They are anxious, they don't know

what they want to do, they are searching for an identity. I love dealing with them, giving guidance."

Mr Montgomery also works with anger management. "That stems from the placement work I did with JN, when I was doing parolees, people just released from prison, a lot of them had anger management issues.

"I still do that as a pro bono, these are decent people who have made big mistakes in their lives. A lot of the mistakes are due to their actions, and their actions involve anger. The area that really interests me is neuropsychology, getting the brain to adjust to transitions.

"Some of the guys I'm talking to want to change, but they don't know what to do, their brains are so fixed on what they know, and when it comes to talking about other areas, they are stuck."

After many years in more pedestrian, more predictable occupations, a move into counselling and psychotherapy has to be with a sense of vocation, rather than a business case. "Counselling may not make you wealthy," Mr Montgomery says, "but it offers returns in other ways.

"Giving back and reaching out to those whose lives are in tatters, or those who can't manage to fit in, and having clients emerge from dark places to find inner strength is the most rewarding part of the job."

Having had some experience of trauma counselling, Mr Montgomery believes it is nearly time to take on a greater challenge. "Once I have finished the Masters I want to work with Lifeline."





Above: Rob Montgomery, counsellor and psychotherapist: "The art of listening".