

Shrink Rap Radio #26, February 22, 2006. Bullying in the Workplace

Frank Smolle interviews Bruce Schubert

(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Dale Hoff)

Introduction: Welcome to Shrink Rap Radio, the planet's premiere psychology podcast. This is your host, Dr. Dave, coming to you from the San Francisco Bay area. Shrink Rap Radio is the show that speaks from the psychologist in me to the psychologist in you whether you be amateur, student or professional.

[Bruce] Schubert: Then one day, I got a phone call from her husband to tell me that she'd killed herself. It's not a game. Bullying is harmful and toxic to human beings.

Dr. Dave: If, like most of us, you have ever been the victim of bullying, whether at work or in the schoolyard, you know how painful bullying can be. In today's program, Frank Smolle, our Australian correspondent, interviews Psychologist Bruce Schubert about his work with bullying in the workplace. After the interview, I'll be back with listener mail and comment, a preview of next week's show and a Podsafe music selection.

[Frank] Smolle: G'day and welcome to Shrink Rap Radio. I'm Dr. Dave's correspondent from the land down under—that's right, Australia. Today, I have an interesting topic all about bullying. Bullying is at the heart of social relationships, especially when they turn bad, not only a hot topic at schools but also in the workplace, which has only today been emphasized on national television here in Australia, concerning a young builder's laborer being bullied not only verbally, but also physically abused at work by his boss to the extent that he now needs facial reconstruction. And today, our guest is Bruce Schubert and we'll be talking about bullying. He has a clinic here in Orange and he also services several towns throughout the central west of New South Wales. A registered counseling psychologist that has years of experience under his belt and deals mainly with organizations and holds workshops on bullying at the workplace. I went to Bruce's clinic expecting to talk for about half an hour and ended up talking twice that amount of time taking up his entire lunch hour which I truly do appreciate. He is such an easy person to talk to and immensely knowledgeable and a great pleasure

to listen to as well as you'll realize listening to the interview. So, sit back and just realize that, as Dr. Dave says, "It's all in your mind."

Smolle: Thank you very, very much for squeezing me into your schedule.

Schubert: I'm happy to. I'm very pleased to be interviewed.

Smolle: You've got clinics around the central west as well. I noticed on your business card.

Schubert: Yeah. I mean, I went into working for myself as a psychologist in private practice in 1990 which is now 16 years ago. People skills are the skills that I have. They're the only thing I know anything about. And given that the people can be awfully complex, [unintelligible] was people skills.

Smolle: While I've been sitting in your waiting room, I noticed that you wrote a lovely presentation condensing a lot of literature into workplace harassment and from what I can tell, that's your specialty.

Schubert: Well, I don't know if it's a specialty, but it's something I get asked to do a fair bit. I frequently get involved in situations because I do employee assistance counseling for various, you know, the gold mine that's nearby here and the one that's in Parks and the one in Lake Cal or other places, as well as other organizations like ambulance and police. You tend to be just coming across people who are in very difficult situations in their workplace. And effectively what it comes down to is they're being bullied in their workplace. And that turns out to be enormously harmful to human beings to be bullied, particularly on an ongoing fashion for any length of time, it becomes incredibly damaging.

Smolle: What do you classify as bullying?

Schubert: I think bullying is—it's pretty hard to put into words—but it really is the abuse of other human beings, treating them like as if they don't matter. It's a fascinating thing in my mind just to—in order to do some of these presentations, I've thought a lot about what makes a bully and I was bullied at school so I've got some first hand stuff to work on.

Smolle: Join the club.

[laughter]

Schubert: What I think it is is that usually in a workplace, bullying starts when someone—that maybe a boss but it may be a colleague, it may be just someone at the same level—but anyway, someone starts to think that someone isn't doing a good job. It almost always starts off with a complaint about something that you're doing. Now, maybe you're not actually doing that's inadequate or wrong. You may just be doing something that the other person doesn't like. But, the reality is that in the bully's mind, they see something going wrong, some imperfection, and they take it upon themselves to treat you abominably because of it. That's the core of it. In every bullying situation I've ever been in, I think that's been the basic core. The bully believes it's okay to treat that person that way. I mean, sometimes, it's because you don't fit in. You're a different sort of person. Maybe you've got a different ethnic background or maybe you've got a speech impediment or, you know, you do things a bit differently to the way other people do them, you know, you're a bit softer or a bit softer spoken. There are a lot of reasons but the person believes—the bully believes that it's okay to treat you abominably. Sometimes that person is the boss who believes that you're not doing the things the way the boss wants you to do so they engage in something that's euphemistically called performance management as an excuse for bullying you. And I'm not against performance management. I think it can be done very well and sometimes it's done extremely poorly and it's just an excuse for bullying.

Smolle: There's sort of a continuum from what the bullies can say right from harassment about your eating style right up to your dress style and the way you speak. In their minds, they can focus on any one field right across the continuum.

Schubert: Yes. I think you're dead right. I think it often is quite irrelevant what exactly starts to cause this problem in the bully's mind with you. It might well be the way you part your hair or the type of clothes you choose or what you have on your sandwiches for lunch. I guess there's [unintelligible] getting at, if we think psychologically for a minute, maybe that's the important thing. All a bully really needs is an excuse and that might suggest to me that there unconscious going on in that bully and maybe in the victim as well. Who knows? But, you know, that it's not always a conscious process. I have to probably up front here say that I'm one of those psychologists who still believes in the unconscious. While I'm not a total

Freudian, I still believe in the unconscious—that there is something that motivates human beings that they're not always aware of, in other words, conscious of. And, therefore, it's coming from somewhere else. And I think often that's why the bully does pick on these, as you say, quite bizarre, you know, things that would not be considered in any way, or any rational way, a reason for such terrible treatment of another human being. But in the bully's mind, it is.

Smolle: Is there sort of a flow on from the schoolyard bully to the workplace bully?

Schubert: Yes, I think very much. Well, I've seen no empirical data about it. I've certainly read a lot. But I have a gut feeling, I suppose, that people who start off as bullies continue because they get a few payoffs for being a bully, I think. I think if you can control other human beings and if you can make them fearful then I think after a while you start to feel like you're a something. And when it comes down to it, feeling like you're a something is what people are all searching for, and bullies in their particular way. Yes, so the flow on effect, I think, you probably could conclude, is pretty clear. Because I think it's very difficult to stop it because the bully sees no real reason to stop it because there is a payoff. They're doing quite well at it, really. Because they can justify it in their own mind, if you ask the bully, they'd say, "Well, what I'm doing is right." And they usually put it like this, "Oh, they needed to be taken down a peg or two." That's a direct quote. "They deserved it." There's certainly no motivation for the bully to change and, as we know in psychology, if there's no motivation to change, they're not going to change. It's habitual and, as you said, you know--a person it's going on--it's a schema that's been there for so long that to change it is almost impossible, I think.

Smolle: If there are some insecurities for the demonstration of having power over other people, could that also be from an insecurity in their own life?

Schubert: Yes. I think there's a sense of insecurity in that if it makes a person they're a something, well then underneath that, I guess, there's something that they're very much trying to overcome.

Smolle: Fear of being nothing.

Schubert: Fear of being ineffectual or powerless or vulnerable, all of which, dear listener, none of us wants to feel and yet we feel them frequently.

Smolle: I listened a lot to a fellow by the name of Dr. Murray Banks, a stage psychologist and he was repeating the same things that every human being likes to be applauded. Every human being likes that pat on the back. It that's the only way of achieving those goals is through treating other people badly, that's what they do.

Schubert: Yeah and I think many people, if we think about it in an organizational context again, they've invested a great deal of their time and energy into being a something in that workplace. Maybe they're a leading hand. Maybe they're the boss or maybe they're just someone who gets the respect of other people because they're feared but it's usually a well-entrenched situation. To be a little bit cynical, when I was growing up we were taught that cheaters never prosper and I grew up, naively obviously, as a person because I remember we use to say that to ourselves in the playground—cheaters never prosper. We'd sing it, in fact. That's what was said over and over if someone got out of hand bullying people around. But I grew up believing about that as one of the schemas in my life and it wasn't very long once I got into the workforce that not only do they prosper, they're usually in charge. And I think it's the same with bullies. I think bullies quickly work themselves into a role in our society where the bullying is okay. Surely, that's what goes on in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. There are places in the world and in Australia, for that matter, you know, in the police service often, you know, where people can be bullies and they can do it quite legally. It's quite still legal in Australia, in every country, in fact, to engage in what's called legal assault. Police are able to do that to you. Legal assault is where you're taken into custody and you're thrown into the back of a paddy wagon and so I guess there are places in the army services and other places, sometimes the church, are places where the power can be exercised and bullies find a home.

Smolle: That reminds me of Zimbardo's study where he took college students and placed one group in prison cells and gave other ones uniforms. So just having that position power, can that also sort of spark the bully within you?

Schubert: Well, I think that's right and I think that study was—it should not only be instructive but it almost should stop us in our tracks and make us fearful about

what lies in the depth of human beings. I think that's what it's about. Those are the—you know, the Milgram experiment which was wonderful too where we got shock people with electricity. I just wish we could have done that as undergraduates because I think that would have been great fun. I think though, on the more serious side, what lies in the depths of human beings should make us a little fearful. And it's wonderful that psychology now and then can unearth it for us all to see.

Smolle: From the victim's point of view of the bullier, it requires quite the bully's actions be like psychological terrorism.

Schubert: Well, these days, we're using the term *psychological abuse* and I think that's a pretty good and instructive term too. I think that's a pretty good way of putting it. But I see myself as what used to be called—I'm not sure whether the categories might not have moved on a little bit in the last 20 or so years but—I see myself as a self psychologist and a self psychologist holds a particularly strange views that the self is actually formed by something and the something that it is formed by is the treatment it receives. The self is a baby, you know, you're hungry and you cry and someone comes and feeds you, you start thinking, "Well, this is good" and if, you know, when you're distressed or you're wet or, you know, something else, you fall over and someone picks you up and they cuddle you, you think, "Hey, this is good. I am looked after." And the I there is the self. It's as if something is formed inside of the human being. "I must matter. See how well they look after me," we must be thinking unconsciously probably. If that continues on, you know, when you play net ball, they come and they watch and they clap when you nearly get a goal or, you know, you're playing cricket and they come and, you know, you hit the ball rather than miss it and your parents get good on you from the sideline, you start after a while to build up this sense of yourself, a self that matters, a self that's worth something. And if that continues consistently enough, I think we actually start to do it for ourselves. We start to look after ourselves, realize that we do matter but we only can get to that point because someone treated us well. And now sometimes in workshops lots of them say, "So at what point do we grow out of that and we no longer need people to treat us well?" There's usually silence in the room because I don't think we do. And the workplace bullying stuff suggests that the reverse is still very powerful that if a kid or an adult is treated badly, they're still as damaged just as reliably as if they're treated well,

their self is enhanced. And it doesn't stop. It continues on into adulthood because we still need encouragement, we still need people to think that we matter and when we don't get it, when we come across someone who runs us down or rubbishes us or who abuses us, whether that be at work whether that be in a relationship or whatever, it's as if the self starts to be weakened again, chipped away at until there isn't much left and sometimes, there's nothing left. That's a particularly harmful sort of a course that human beings can be coming back upon. I guess that's often what brings them into counseling when there isn't much left and you can tell there's nothing left. They will suffer panic attacks, for example. They can get depressed. They become anxious about life and dangers. They've lost any trust in their own self and in the world to treat it well. That's when you realize how vulnerable that self still is and how it can easily be harmed just by simple things like words. The other thing we taught ourselves as kids was that words can never harm us. Sticks and stones can break your bones, but not words. And then one day, you realize that words still have a power to undo that sense of who I am and realize that we are quite vulnerable and actually all of us are quite vulnerable. I really don't think there are too many people who magically are bulletproof. I think it just needs the right circumstances to bring them undone.

Smolle: Even with myself at school. The school teachers said, "Frank, you're no good for anything academic. You're only good for manual labor. I've really gone out of my way to prove to myself I am intelligent, not an idiot.

Schubert: Yes. I think that's a very good example, I think, a powerful example of how a few words, badly chosen by a teacher who's having a bad day, could actually cause a kid to put a label on themselves that turns out to be lifelong. I think that those things--the teachers would do well to think carefully about the way they treat those little selves that are in their classes and the harm that could do. But for every story like that, I guess, there are those teachers who said just the right thing at the right time.

Smolle: With the recovery of the victim, of a bully's victim, what sort of treatment regains the self, to regain the well-being in their life.

Schubert: I see what you're getting at and I'd love to be able to say there's one recipe that always works. I've never found it, I'm afraid. I know that sometimes

the harm that people come to can be quite profound. It often is because not only his work starts to go badly but maybe things at home start to go badly as well and your partner is no longer that understanding soul that they were and they might become bit short or a bit cranky or a bit abusive themselves. And that's when it is as if that last little bit of the self that was holding us together gets chipped away and crumbles or fragments or something like that. I know these are not very psychological terms I'm using but that's how I see it. It's as if it fragments and that's when a person is really quite harmed. To give you a real example, I started seeing a lady here. She had been the only female who'd ever been put in this role and she was picked on by the six or seven colleagues, all male colleagues by the way, who believed in their justified purpose that she was doing it wrong. That she wasn't doing it the way they would do things. She was approaching it not in a way that they would have approached it. The abominable treatment included abusing her, giving her all the worst jobs, complaining that they had to set aside one of the toilets as a female toilet. And I can remember a day, she came to counseling around that period, she told me that she came into work one day and the female toilet had been ransacked. Urine had been put everywhere, feces spread around everywhere and some sort of a sign. I can't remember what the sign said but something that got across that she wasn't wanted there. Now, you're thinking to yourself, these are children. No, no. These are adults. These are adults that behave that way to other adults. I saw that for a couple of months, I suppose. She also had some issues with home that weren't working. And I thought it was actually starting to go well. I am getting around to answering your question. I thought it was starting to go well because I could see her starting to put herself back together again, I thought. I thought she was starting to be a bit more confident about herself, a bit more prepared to stand up and speak her mind and release some of her feelings and all that sort of thing. Then one day, I got a phone call from her husband to tell me that she'd killed herself. It's not a game. Bullying is harmful and toxic to human beings in any case. Ultimately toxic. So in order to answer your question the sort of thing that'd help people is we have to build up that sense of self. But how do you build it up? I guess you've got to start to get people to realize that they are valuable. Call me old-fashioned or Rogerian, perhaps, but I think that that happens in counseling where people are treated like as if they matter. All those little things that Rogers says was quite important in dealing with a human being. And if that can begin there then maybe they can start to feel like they have value

and can start to do a few things. I like to think of, you know, one of the cures for depression as doing what I like to call things that create the anti-depressant effect, doing something worthwhile, something where you can feel like, “gee, that’s a good job. You know, I pruned my roses. Gee, they look good.” Well, that’s the anti-depressant effect. That’s the beginning of a person realizing that they are effectual, that they’re not completely incompetent. Behaviorist colonies are clapping now. I mean, it is partly behavioral to be able to say, “Look. If you could prune those roses between now and we talk next then let’s talk about that and let’s talk about how you did it and how it made you feel. And okay, so what else might you be able to do?” So rather than focusing on those things a person can’t do or the things that they’ve rubbished for or told that they’re doing wrong, let’s focus on those things that we can do and start to feel like we are a something. You know, how do we stop a bully from blossoming into a full-blown bully? Well, one of the things I think organizations can do is to bring about consequences for that behavior. As I said before, I’m not awfully optimistic about an organization’s ability to stop bullying where it’s really entrenched. But if it hasn’t commenced properly or it’s only come in, just begun, perhaps an organization that takes the welfare of beings, the human beings seriously would make that bully realize that there are some consequences for their behavior. So that’s why employees in New South Wales in Australia we have a Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission for which you can, you know, you can get on the web and put in a complaint against someone if everything else has failed in your workplace and they’ll be brought to account. It doesn’t solve every problem but it might well wake up a few that human beings aren’t for that sort of treatment. Apart from that, there’s very little that you can do because, as we know in psychology, the only person you can help is someone who wants to help themselves. In other words, I’ve identified that there’s a problem and that I want to change it. As I said before, bullying has too many payoffs for that to occur very often, to take bullying seriously. Then you as a boss must take it seriously. You must demonstrate that you take it seriously by having a policy, having a program, having consequences, you know, being prepared to take them on. There’s a few things that a boss has to do if their employees are to see that the boss is taking it seriously. But when that happens, you see marvelous results because employees start to realize that they do matter, that workplace safety matters, that how they treat each other matters. Let me get back to something you asked me about at the beginning about people skills.

The skills that help people have got to be the skills that help people realize that people matter—that there is a significant value there. You can't walk on top of people and think that that's just okay. It's not okay. But in reality what it comes down to is that most workplace's employees do well because they have what's called good will and good will is something you can't run an organization without, as it turns out. You can try. You have to have a plethora of rules and regulations to stop people, you know, knocking off the staplers. When people actually have good will, they're prepared to come to do their work to their ability and they get a buzz out of it and then it's quite straightforward. If people are treating them well then they are treating other people well. See, it all rather hangs together. I think that's the best sort of workplace you could be part of, where people realize that they matter and they will be looked after in every respect and I guess there are some marvelous rewards when people begin to feel that and when you haven't got that then you're in deep trouble.

Smolle: Moving on to interpersonal skills. I've always saw being able to have those interpersonal skills, the prerequisite is to have that intrapersonal skill, the skill of being able to know yourself and control yourself and to understand what buttons need to be pressed for you to turn into a bully because I think there's a bully in all of us. It's just that we know what those buttons are. We choose not to let anybody touch them.

Schubert: Yes. I think that's very sensible. You're right. If a person was in themselves secure enough to not have to need to control other people, just so you can control the threats, you know, I'm sure that's partly why a bully does it because he can't have anyone who does things differently, he can't have anyone who approaches things from a creative or different perspective or even dresses differently to me. But if a person were secure enough and they could get on top of those things, then I guess they wouldn't have to be a bully. So you're quite right. Ultimately, I often think that if a bully felt good about themselves, that if their self had been treated like as if it mattered then maybe they would have learned differently. You know, different ways of getting that feeling of being a something apart from having to do it with the expense of other people.

Smolle: Within Australian law, to quite an extent, the boss is responsible for the behavior of the employees.

Schubert: There is a liability that comes in organizations. If you are—I'm not a lawyer but this is an issue of law—it's called vicarious liability. Vicarious liability is if you're doing what the organization asks you to do and something goes wrong, the organization will take responsibility. For example, if they give me a car because I'm going about and I'm going on about my business, my job within my job description and I prang the car, they'll pay for it because I was actually doing it on behalf of the organization. Unfortunately, it works in reverse, too. So that if you're doing something in an organization and you're allowed to do it and it does harm, then the organization is actually responsible for the harm that's done. So organizations have to be very careful that the people don't do anything that's not what the organization wants them to do. One of the implications is that if you're bullying and it's not stopped by the boss then, in a sense, the organization is giving you permission to do that harm. Vicariously liability. So you've got to be very careful these days. People in Australia at the moment, we're becoming litigious. People are prepared to take each other to court or to industrial commissions and other places where we have those facilities to do something about it. And, you know, there are examples where—well, I can think of one that's on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission which is one of those organizations. They talk a bit about a bank and how this bank had trained the employees not to abuse the customers. And those sort of things had been taken very seriously and they'd even made a video. The video trained employees not to abuse customers but one of the bank managers had abused one of the employees and the employee put a complaint and the bank manager was found to be liable because they hadn't been trained not to abuse each other. It's a strange ruling but that's basically what it came down to, that the bank didn't put in enough effort into making sure that their employees weren't abused. They put effort into the customers but not the employees so they ended up paying that person quite a bit of money. So there's some case law that's establishing this idea of vicarious liability and organizations are starting to take it a bit more seriously.

Smolle: Are there any books that you'd suggest reading?

Schubert: There's a multitude of books about workplace harassment. None particularly stand out. They can be helpful because they often tell a similar story about how people have to confront the situation and many of them are as pessimistic as I am about the ability to change a bully. I think that's sensible.

There's also a lot of good web resources. There's an organization in Queensland in Australia and there's a very good website in Canada. I can't think of what it's actually called. I think it's called bullying.com or something like that. I was going to actually recommend in terms of a book—I was going to recommend that you read the book called “People Skills” by Robert Bolton. Bolton wrote this back in the nineties now I'd imagine. It's a little book. It's a psychology textbook but it turns out to be one that's actually written in English. You can read it which is good since it's about people skills. In his little book he has, the first four chapters are largely about listening, you know, being able receive messages accurately, the next four chapters are about sending them effectively, being assertive and being able to stand up for oneself, and the last four chapters are about using those first two skills, listening and sending clear messages, to resolve conflicts. And so I think that's a useful little book and I've been a user of it for many years and use it in workshops quite a bit because it is so sensible. If we can use those skills of listening and understanding human beings and being able to send clear messages and stand up for ourselves then we can resolve conflicts.

Smolle: Thank you again so much for your time.

Schubert: Well, I'm a counselor. Most of the time, I listen, so if I get a chance to talk, I talk a lot. Thanks for the opportunity.

Smolle: Thank you very much.

[music]

Dr. Dave: Frank and Bruce, thanks for that report. Speaking of bullying, if you haven't already listened to it, check out Shrink Rap Radio episode #3 on victimhood, responsibility and choice. I tell the story there about an incident in which I was bullied as a freshman in college and I managed to make some lemonade out of that particular lemon.

[letters from listeners]

Now, let's dip into the mailbag. I received a couple of emails from Michael F. in Illinois who has written before and I always am glad to hear from you, Michael.

[Michael writes]: This week's program on NLP (that's neurolinguistic programming) was one of the best. You commented that successful NLP therapy may be the result of good shamanism rather than good science. "Now, what does that mean," I thought. A google search led me to an overview of shamanism at deoxy.org. This suggests that a shaman is an individual who, because of his or her ventures and intensive training into different states of consciousness, can now be a spiritual guide for others.

[Michael goes on to say]: I next revisited the website describing the Depth Psychology Masters Degree curriculum at Sonoma State. It certainly seems that at least some of the courses encourage students to explore different states of consciousness. I'm speculating that NLP training probably involves a similar level of exploration. Of course, training in neither Depth Psychology or NLP involves the intensity of training suggested by the above mentioned website in order to be a shaman. Anyway, all this still begs the question, when is therapy science and when is it shamanism?

Dr. Dave: Michael, as usual, you make some good points here. My NLP guest, Pati McDermott, was confused by this point as well when she listened back to the show. I think that I'll want to create a future show in which I go into these issues more deeply. My observation about shamanism was not meant to be pejorative nor was it meant to be taken literally. When I used the term, I was using it somewhat metaphorically. Also, to me, shamanism is a good thing, not a bad thing. I see the shaman as a trained and gifted healer who, through a variety of procedures, is able to evoke the patient's inner resources for self-regulation and healing. So, I think I'll devote some future show to the topic of—maybe I'll call it "Psychotherapy: Science or Shamanism." So, let's look forward to that. We also got a letter from--

[Dane in Alameda, California, who says]: I've recently added your show to my ipod list. I'm a new Psychology student and a member of the U.S. Coast Guard down in Alameda and think the show is interesting. I'm writing to let you know that your ipod promo is dated for 8/01/06, making it the most recent. This is making it impossible to get the most recent updates, only as it keeps downloading the future date show. Just thought I would let you know. Thanks in advance and keep up the great show.

Dr. Dave: Well, thanks for that feedback, Dane. I have tried to change that date and, hopefully, that problem has gone away. Next, I thought you might be interested in an email exchange between me and one of my listeners, Liz Bella, who wrote:

Bella: Dr. Dave, I listen to your podcast often and you've taught me so much already. I just want to say thank you. And also, I would love to hear something from you about strange phobias people have. For example, I myself, have a strange phobia that I can't explain. I love to read and when I don't have the book that I want or need to read near me, I get so anxious. Also, I always have this vision or desire for a wall to wall bookshelf in my house, the kind they used to have in the old days. I have four smaller bookshelves in my house and it's not enough for me because sometimes I get angry because I don't have the book or the bookshelf near me. Isn't that strange? Could you say something about it? Thanks so much for everything. Liz Bella.

Dr. Dave: Here's what I wrote back to Liz Bella. Hi Liz Bella. Thanks so much for your note. Where are you located? I'm always curious to know where my listeners are (which is true). I'm not sure how to react to the two phobias you described. I'm not even certain whether I would categorize them as phobias or perhaps obsessive-compulsive behaviors. The fact that you get anxious when you don't have a book makes me wonder if there's some underlying anxiety—something you don't want to face or think about—and reading might be a way of keeping your mind away from it. This is just a hypothesis on my part. You might try closing your eyes, taking a few deep breaths, relaxing and then asking yourself, “What's behind my need to keep myself immersed in books? What do I not want to look at?” For this to work, you have to be really open to whatever images, sounds, memories or thoughts first pop into your head. Don't strain at it. Just put the question to yourself and be totally open to the first thing that comes into your mind. Now, I'm going to go out on a different limb. I don't know where I stand with past lives. I don't have any intimations for myself of past lives. But I was just reading an article on past life dreams and that may be why this comes to my mind now. Your description of wanting to have a wall full of bookshelves “like in the old days” makes me wonder if this might be from a past life. I don't know where you are with reincarnation or even where I am with it, but does this suggestion give you any sort of tingle? Keep listening. And then I signed it Dr. Dave. It really did feel like I was going out on a

bit of a limb there but I also feel like it's important for me to trust my intuition. And so that's why I responded as I did. Then I got an email back from--

[Liz Bella saying]: Dr. David, I love you. I just love you. Yes, you can read my email on the air. (I'd asked her if it was okay to share this.) Your quick response was amazing to me. Now, you'll be surprised. I'm from Brazil. I'm 33 years old and a mother of two, happily married. I'm also a spiritist (Search for Allan Kardec, she says, I guess, on the web). And, yes, yes, yes. I do believe in reincarnation. In my country, the spiritist community is very big—huge—bigger than in France, where it began. I'm a bookworm since I started to read and because I came from a very poor, humble family, books were an issue and they couldn't afford to buy them for us. There were three kids. But where could I find one if I was interested in it. When I started to gain my own money, everything was for books. I wasn't an A student, but that's another history and I don't want to bore you. Well, I'm a nurse but since my first son was born, I stay at home—almost nine years now. I'm a classical homemaker and cook every day. Actually, I hear your podcast while I'm cleaning in my kitchen, taking care of the kids and my wonderful hubby. Every week, my friends and I study the spiritism books, not esoterical at all. I live in the USA now for about seven years. My husband is an American. When I came here I didn't speak any English at all and I first learned to read two years later when I could speak. I love philosophy and I read Plato, Martin Buber, Nietzsche, Jung and so on. [Wow, that's impressive.] And Jung brought you into my ipod. Well, I better stop boring you. [Hardly boring.] You must get a lot of nuts like me asking for help, right? [Well, not so far.] Well, you already helped this nut a great deal with your insight and so no need to get back to me. Just want to tell you that my friends and I love you very much. Keep up the good work sharing your knowledge with the average people. I forgot to say that I'm in Chicago, Illinois. Love, Bella.

Dr. Dave: Liz Bella, thanks so much for your charming correspondence and for making me glad that I trusted my intuition. Then, we got the following on our voice line.

Jeff: Hey, Dr. Dave. My name is Jeff and I am a Christian counselor working in the southern area—working in Georgia. And I just wanted to tell you kudos on the show. I love it. I'm going to be beginning a podcast myself. And I just wanted to tell you that the sound quality is, I think, even better now that you're using the

headset. And I think you are doing a fantastic job in getting a lot of good points out there and having interviews which are bringing a lot of things about different forms a therapy to the forefront. Thank you so much.

Dr. Dave: Well, Jeff, thanks so much for the shout down there in Georgia. I'm glad that the sound quality is getting better. I'm not using that headset right now but I do think the sound quality is pretty good now. At least, I hope it is. But I'll tell you that voice line—that sound quality sure leaves something to be desired, doesn't it?

Dr. Dave: Once again, I've run longer than I planned. So let me tell you about next week's show. I'll be interviewing a psychologist in New Hampshire who has written a computer program designed to help you analyze your dreams. Also, I'll have a voice update from Mohammed in Baghdad and he will comment on the recent uproar over those Danish cartoons. So I definitely think you'll want to catch the next episode of Shrink Rap Radio. Okay as I think you can tell by now, I love hearing from listeners. Please e-mail me at Shrink@ShrinkRapRadio.com. Our show notes are at www.ShrinkRapRadio.com. You can leave voicemail for Shrinkpod on Skype or Gizmo Project. And, as I mentioned earlier, we also have a phone in the U. S. where you can leave voicemail. That number is 206-888-2746. Stay tuned for the Podsafe music selection right after our closing theme music. You will find a link in our show notes to the Podsafe artist. If you like his music, I encourage you to go to the link on our show notes at www.ShrinkRapRadio.com and take a look at his CD there. The song is called "Working Day" and the artist is Willy Shutter. The title "Working Day" goes well with today's theme of bullying in the workplace. Check it out. After the Podsafe selection, stay tuned for a promo of Podcaster Confessions. This is a podcast featuring interviews with podcasters. Hopefully, you'll hear Dr. Dave interviewed there one day. That's it for now. This is Dr. Dave saying, "It's all in your mind."