

# Fond Memories Of Someone We Were Lucky To Have Met

Marisa Poggioli and Cristina Fiorani

My story with Tony Ryle began earlier than Cristina's. I was living and working in the UK at the time. I was finishing my training as a counselling psychologist when, after meeting Tony, I was offered a placement with him and joined his supervision group, and was introduced to CAT ideas. For me, it was a "Eureka" moment. I felt that for the first time I had something illuminating and useful, that empowered me to help my patients. It enabled me to use all I knew, and took away the anxiety of having to be the expert. When I eventually transmitted, with enthusiasm, what I had learned to Cristina, she too was captivated. This was 22 years ago and, as clinicians, we have never looked back. I guess we wanted to be like Tony and we were travelling hopefully.

We had a long collaboration with him. The PSQ, which we standardised in Italy. He supervised us personally, but also gave his time to supervise our supervision group in Italy, which enabled me to qualify as a supervisor.

We send a picture by Piero della Francesca Polittico della Madonna della Misericordia which to us is symbolic of Tony Ryle. We got to know the painting because he had a copy in his farmhouse in Umbria. He invited us into his Italian home and made us

welcome. Cristina and I both have a copy, and to us the figure represents what it felt like to be under his wing. He was a kind and humble man, which we feel is an attitude of intelligent people.

Misericordia derives from "miser", which means mercy and "cordis", which means heart. It is similar to "compassionevole" which refers to the part of the soul



that enables us to feel the pain felt by another being, as if we suffered it too. In English, it translates into compassion and empathy. We feel that Tony had a lot of "Misericordia".

I still have some early training materials written by Tony, from when I was at St Thomas's, and I have always remembered the story about the detachment on military manoeuvres in the Alps, who got lost. It was freezing and began to snow. After three days, when everyone at base camp thought they had died, they returned. They explained to their lieutenant that

they had thought that they would die on the mountain, but one of them found a map in his pocket. They calmed down and, once the snow had stopped, found their way back. To his astonishment, the lieutenant noticed that it was a map of the Pyrenees, not the Alps at all. Tony's take on this was that, if you are lost, any old map will do. It is a reference point, a place to start, an anchor, which often becomes secondary once the activity has started.

Of course, Tony added that it probably helps more to have the right map, but just like a map of the Pyrenees can help you get out of the Alps, maps open up the possibility of people

finding their own way.

Thank you Tony, for your time and wisdom that you shared with us, and for being so human.