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Two: Tom Bratter cannot change rule one. Before I symbolically burned my membership card in the American Psychological Association, 10 kids died of drug overdoses, committed suicide, or were murdered, which radicalized me. I view psychotherapy as a war. If I cannot convince a kid to change, I know damn well they will live wasted lives, so I accept this as a mandate to force them to change."

As an example of the intellectual ferment of the 1970s, Bratter recalled an International Conference on Therapeutic Communities in Bangkok, Thailand in the mid-1970s, where he met Mel Wasserman, Founder of the CEDU Schools. Both men were very much involved in the intellectual stimulation around the concept of therapeutic communities, and attended as many conferences as they could on the subject. According to Bratter, they discussed how these concepts could or should apply to schools for troubled adolescents.

Bratter explained that he started The John Dewey Academy to prove to psychotherapists and educators that it is a crime to assume that some are too damaged to change. "No kid in our history has been maintained on any psychotropic poison. All graduate and attend competitive colleges. A third make the dean's list, a third become responsible role models and student leaders, and more than a third attend graduate school. There is no residential treatment program or special purpose school in the world that can duplicate these results."

Interestingly, Bratter said that few psychiatrists and psychologists refer patients; instead they send their own kids. "I would wager that at least 20 percent of our graduates have a parent who is a therapist or teacher. We work with a special bunch of kids who are not amenable to traditional techniques and convince them to 'bust their asses.' Our kids spend at least three hours a day, every day, studying, and we are accredited by the New England Schools and College Association. They attend at least 10 hours of groups. And there is no secret why they work so hard; they know that if they produce, we will convince the best colleges to admit them. Where is the controversy? What we do obviously works!"

Bratter says heavy peer pressure and using treatment as a catalyst is very important in the healing of the students. He emphasizes peer pressure for three reasons: "Kids don't give others an inch, the helper learns more, and it is vital for these kids to stop masking their feelings and start getting honest."

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