

## Hearing the Many Voices in Practice:

### Constraints and co-creative possibilities in dialogue

*“The foundation stone of the whole educational process is human curiosity. This is what makes me question, know, act, ask again, recognise “Paulo Freire (1998)*

This workshop opened discussion on *both* on the conditions that limit our capacity for useful dialogue with clients and colleagues and the ways in which we can find creativity through attention to a politically informed humanistic orientation focused on the many contexts that shape our practice for good or ill.

#### **Workshop Content**

The workshop began by portraying three scenarios in which dialogue is restricted followed by a consideration on how creativity in practice may overcome, sidestep or confront constraints and transform them into co-creative possibilities.

Each scenario was based on incidents from my practice as a family therapist with children young people and their families in the UK national Health Service.

#### **Three relational contexts that can restrict creative dialogue:**

*Portrayal One:* When language of diagnosis restricts more expansive humanising practices: ADHD ASD and OCD: (the boy called Brian)

*Portrayal Two:* When narratives about another become embodied and restrict movement in thought and action: (The angry man and the connecting handshake)

*Portrayal Three;* Where problems of human distress are located only inside a person and resourceful contexts and persons are marginalised.: (Tom and the family “Think Tank “)

This was followed with an anecdote of some ways to preserve the contexts in which creativity can thrive; ( here creativity in practice acts as another metaphor for resistance against oppressive practices )

The Swedish mental health team's reflections on preserving the conditions for mutual humanisation in practice:

- “What we need are open doors to let other see what we do
- What we also need are open practices to share our experiences in joint endeavour
- What we also need are open minds to permit and entertain other perspectives from our own
- And what we need are open hearts to show each other that we can be vulnerable and worried sad and joyful in our work without being afraid of being criticised “

These are the condensed words of the team at BUP Kalmar during an 18-month training in creative practices with children and young people .

The following concepts and principles form the basis of a systemic humanising orientation to practice and useful dialogue.

## Systemic Humanistic Principles informing Dialogical Practices

*The pursuit of full humanity cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in antagonistic relations between oppressor and oppressed . **No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so**".*

*(Paulo Freire 1996 p.66)*

*"From the outset (the)effort (of the radical humanist) must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking, and the quest for mutual humanisation. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power.*

*(Paulo Freire 1996 p.56)*

The search for psychosocial resources is informed and influenced by political contexts that shape what it is possible to achieve

- Creativity does not materialise by oppressing the oppressor but aims to ,*"maintain alive the flame of resistance that sharpens (our) capacity for risk ,for adventure ..."* ( Freire 1998 p 32 ).
- Systemic humility, uncertainty and mutual learning are interconnected.
- All interaction is aimed towards us becoming more fully human.
- Change in Life is inextricably bound to power relations and the forces that push us from behind our backs (*after Erich Fromm*).
- Humanisation in practice is relational and dialogical, refusing to categorise and pathologize those who seek our help and those who try to help.
- Concepts from systemic narrative and related theories are woven together with ideas drawn from Freire's radical humanism to provide a framework for considering a broad range of practitioner action and thinking that includes a political critique of current social mental health and educational processes (amongst others )

## Co-Creativity and the Promotion of Generative Dialogue

*“Creativity is challenge ~ a sense that something is not right leads us to creativity, to challenge, to resist and to ask the question, 'Why is this so?'. We learn by questioning. How can we believe in something without questioning it? We get organised by a fear of offending the status quo. Creativity includes acts of dissidence”.* (Nawal El Saadawi ,2015).

- Promote aesthetic practices as opposed to anaesthetic practices.
- Promote improvisation, experimentation, play and performance of practice.
- Move from manualisation to **human**ualisation of practice.
- To be open (socially) minded.
- To create a culture of connection, experimentation, and mutual learning.
- To appreciate the importance of serious play and loving humour.
- To maintain curiosity, care and courage ( wise fear);

*“... to live well we must be able to imaginatively identify with other people, and allow them to identify with us. Unkindness involves a failure of the imagination so acute that it threatens, not just our happiness but our sanity. Caring about others .... is what makes us fully human”.* (Phillips and Taylor, 2009).

### References:

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