

Together...

moving with our eyes closed

Co-creating the intersubjective dialogue

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Formulations and Their Philosophical Underpinnings'. Roger Frie, Ph.D., Psy.D. and Bruce Reis, Ph.D. in *Contemporary psychoanalysis*, 37:297-327.

Companioning is a term originating from the Melbourne Institute of Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy (MIECAT). It refers to the role undertaken by one person to support the personal inquiry of an 'other' in their pursuit of making meaning.

Co-creation describes the process by which two or more people contribute to the intersubjective dialogue by creating responses using any modality, for the purpose of externalising emergent ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Julie is an experiential educator, therapist and artist who has enjoyed working together with youth at risk, people living with mental illness and young women escaping domestic violence. She has recently been appointed as the Creative Arts Co-ordinator for Whitelion, a youth advocacy organisation, and is currently completing her masters thesis at the Melbourne Institute for Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy. In the following article she shares some of her reflections on the focus of her research inquiry.

How is the intersubjective dialogue co-created?

In the space that together we create between us what happens to facilitate the intersubjective dialogue? Fundamentally the focus of my inquiry is to develop a deeper understanding of how the therapeutic relationship is formed via the use of creative arts modalities while endeavouring to articulate the contributing factors that shape the intersubjective dialogue.

Key Words and definitions:

Intersubjectivity refers to the interaction involving and occurring between separate conscious minds: myself and another person, or self and other/s, whereby via our shared cognition thoughts and feelings are expressed, so contributing to the shaping of our ideas and relations in the pursuit of making meaning.

Definition drawn from:

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersubjectivity, Miriam Webster Dictionary - www.m-w.com and an article entitled 'Understanding Intersubjectivity: Psychoanalytic

Co-creation begins with the formation of a relationship and in that process some sense of the other is felt and responded to. The very formation of the relationship itself is a co-creation – my sense of you and your sense of me feeling the atmosphere between us and our place within it, contained by time and physical space. Each relationship and indeed each encounter within a therapeutic frame is unique, the last meeting different from the one before. The personal material presented, the offers made in response and the moments that emerge and are shared along the way, articulate such differences.

There are a number of key areas of interest that continue to inspire my curiosity but where to start and what to do with all the knowledge running around in my head? To avoid the trap of framing language to articulate my every thought I'm just going to take off and allow my stream of consciousness to steer the moment and if I'm lucky, unearth new ideas for this inquiry.

In a therapeutic context, every time a person walks through the door to share time and space with me I'm not just with friends and there's not this free undisturbed casualness afforded by the hours, days and years that pass between those we hold close to us over time. By their nature the relationships I share within a therapeutic context provide a stark contrast; when bound by a brief and set period of minutes, an intimate and intense window of time captures us both. It is through that window that I experience an attentiveness and call to be present, and a waiting for what may emerge to be shared in

a way that is unlike any other interpersonal interaction.



Co-created response depicting shared experience with client. 1.

What fascinates me is the unique dialogue in each relationship that appears to take on a life of its own. There is no set process or particular way of being in space that confines us. There is no set of instructions that go after particular responses, results or outcomes. It is what it is in the moment lived and breathed and, although it so often feels like I've got no idea of what I'm doing, there is progress that manifests in response to the deepest desires of the other, that may have been stated at the outset or may have emerged at some point during the companionship process.

Being fully present seems to facilitate spontaneity where I find myself making offers that appear to come out of nowhere. It is a spontaneous process of improvisation that leads to the making of offers in the moment and which in turn provides some kind of allowing for the other to participate freely without checking in consciously to what the offer is and how to cognitively process it before responding. It reminds me of my experiences as a child playing by myself or with others, where there was no cognitive attachment to structuring the next moment or the next experience. Instead it was a free flowing path facilitated without conscious intent, as I or those I

was playing with moved from one activity to the next without thought or favour.

Over time the companionee becomes accustomed to how offers can be made and begins to make an offer him/herself that we may both engage in. It is the offer that often stimulates the intersubjective dialogue and when reflecting upon it I observe that there is little or no verbal language being shared during the making of creative responses regardless of the modality being used; that though we are with each other we are also somehow alone with our own creating. I think for us as adults who have become so attached to our conscious functioning, it is the trust developed in the relationship that, as Tony, one of my clients observed, "inspires a process of submission", a surrender to the experience.

It is as if we walk into the moment with our eyes closed.....letting the moment move through us.....through the relationship and in that experience the other is encouraged to become independent in that process.....able to create moments that emerge from their own courage and curiosity.....there is a sense of guiding the person there or sometimes being guided by the companionee.....regardless, there is an effortlessness that accompanies us as we move together.....a sense of flying into knowing. Tony said another beautiful thing about it. He said something about his experience of it as an exchange of energy that brings surprise.....the treasure of the other that you are inspired by.....and the ideas, thoughts and feelings that flow between you develops an easy mutuality.



Co-created response depicting shared experience with client. 2.

Having the confidence to improvise, rarely imposing structure and being committed to relinquishing control contributes significantly to developing courage and increased freedom of expression between myself as the companion and the ‘other’ as companionee.

In the quiet I’m left wondering about my attentiveness to honouring the courage of those I companion. Indeed I find myself questioning my own courage in respect of what I choose to share or not and what’s clear, is that when I am open and invite an ‘other’ to do the same, together, we give birth to moments of significance. And so it is my hope that with increased confidence to give of myself that I may come upon significant moments, not as precious and rarely found jewels but as regular gifts of this life; that I may become more accustomed to the value of the moments that pass frequently between us as human beings and so model for those I share time with how we can, each of us, catch a moment before it passes beyond our grasp.