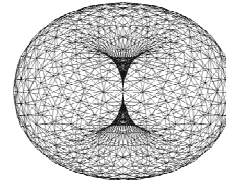


DEFINITIONAL CEREMONY

Outsider Witness Responses

Witnessing transformation



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A structured process of
multi-layered tellings and
retellings

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Part 1. **The telling**
by the person or persons at the
centre of the ceremony

Part 2. **The re-telling**
the outsider witnesses respond
to the telling

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Part 3. **The retelling of the retelling**
the person or people at the centre
respond to outsider witnesses

Part 4. **More retelling** can be
responses from the outsider, another
group or others in the audience

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IDENTIFYING THE EXPRESSION

As you listened to _____
(use person's name, or story, or
video/film etc) was there
anything that stood out for you?
Struck a chord?
Were drawn to?

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DESCRIBING THE IMAGE

2. What did the story suggest to you about what might be important values, or beliefs, or hopes to _____?
(Use their name or the characters/authors etc). Was there any **image** evoked for you?

EMBODYING RESPONSE

3. You spoke about what stood out for you in hearing _____'s story.
What is it about **your own life/work** that explains why this caught your attention?

ACKNOWLEDGING a SHIFT

4. How is it for you now after this conversation?
Any difference from before to now?
(or other question to acknowledge any movement in understanding etc)

Who?

- ▣ Inside the person's existing networks
- ▣ - eg family, friends or people in the community
- ▣ Outside their networks
- ▣ - eg invitations to professionals (aka reflecting team)
- ▣ - lists of registers of people who have experienced similar difficulties, sought consultation (therapy) and agreed to help out therapeutically with others

How often?

- ▣ A one-off meeting, or more than one meeting

- ▣ Regularly if a group of professionals work together

Why?

- ▣ Link between what happens in therapy room and rest of a person's life

- ▣ More likely steps taken in therapy will be translated into action in their daily lives if friends, family or others invited to sessions as witnesses
- ▣ A community of acknowledgment to peoples preferred identity claims

OSW Responses

- ▣ 1. curiosity/mystery (about the alternative story/steps/resistances etc)
 - ▣ - osw situate their comments in their own personal experience
- ▣ 2. acknowledgment resonance / transport
 - ▣ - linking lives around shared themes

Hazards & helpful hints

- ▣ Therapist takes responsibility
- ▣ OSW responses are for the benefit of the person consulting the therapist (centering the person)
- ▣ Keep the conversation coming back to the person

Hazards & helpful hints

- ▣ AVOIDING APPLAUSE - eg pointing out positives or congratulating people can be experienced as condescending or patronizing.
- ▣ As if I am making a judgement of the person & that I am superior in doing so
- ▣ ACKNOWLEDGMENT rather than applause

- ▣ Resist giving advice but why I found it moving
- ▣ OSW focus on preferred or emerging alternative story
- ▣ Building teamwork of osw - collective contribution more important than individual witnesses, build on each others comments
- ▣ How much I talk - arrange with other osw to interrupt me or ask a question so reflecting process more like a conversation than a series of speeches

- ▣ Avoid getting carried away in my own story, bring it back to relating to the person's alternative story
- ▣ Remembering history - history of why certain things important to me are linked to the important things that the person said

- ▣ Not imposing values - care not to reproduce social 'norms' but response to what person said about their own values - refer back to what the person has SPOKEN about, rather than assume values or meanings
- ▣ Avoid comparing reflections of other osw's - what the person resonates with is unpredictable

Confidentiality

- ▣ Negotiate what will and will not be talked about before and after the session
- ▣ Reconsider the value of a wider audience to preferred stories and conventional understandings of counsellor confidentiality
- ▣ Workplace policies

Uses...

- ▣ Community gatherings – can include music/song/video using words that people use
- ▣ Reflective practice – learning skills and practice and being part of an osw team
- ▣ Couples in conflict – one person interviewed, other person act as osw, then next session roles reversed
- ▣ Workplace conflict

References

- ▣ Carey, M & Russell, S, 2003, 'Outsider-witness practices: some answers to commonly asked questions', *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, Dulwich Centre Publications, Adelaide.
- ▣ White, M, 2007, *Maps of Narrative Practice*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York.