

Workshop Outlines For 2010

PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN JOHNELLA TEACHING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

I am often asked to teach in communities outside of Auckland. If you are interested in approaching me for teaching, I suggest you review the prepared descriptions of the one or two day presentation topics and 4 day Intensives.

You might prefer to use these descriptions to develop a workshop or presentation that suits the particular needs of your group.

I tend to limit the participant numbers for intensives in order to maximise skills, integration and practice. The descriptions of the intensives are general because I find that the clinical focus/themes is directed by the participants work interests.

The presentations tend to suit larger groups as the teaching style is more didactic.

If any of these presentations or workshops interest you please contact Jill Kelly (email: edgepress@xtra.co.nz) with your proposal.

About Johnella

Johnella Bird is a counselling practitioner and co-director of The Family Therapy Centre in Auckland, New Zealand. She consults to and facilitates teaching programmes for mental health practitioners, social workers, psychiatrists, counsellors, psychologists and nurses throughout Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The theoretical and technical development of her clinical work continues to be founded on an extensive counselling practice with individuals, couples and families. Johnella has written three books, *'The Heart's Narrative'*, *'Talk That Sings'* and *'Constructing The Narrative In Super-vision'* (2006). Johnella's recent release is a set of three one hour DVDs and an accompanying workbook, *'Constructing Narratives To Make A Difference'* (2008).

email: edgepress@xtra.co.nz

website: www.heartsnarrative.cc

(1)

RE-VISIONING THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

When we consider the question, 'What contributes to successful therapy?' the evidence suggests that the experience of the therapeutic relationship significantly influences the outcome. This experience provides the material I use to generate a relational perspective. When this perspective is generated people (therapists and clients) are positioned to explore and negotiate subjective experience within a power relationship.

Through this exploration, opportunities arise for people to experience themselves as active in the creation and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship. In this presentation I will demonstrate a process for negotiating direct experience within the bounds of the therapeutic relationship.

(2)

TRANSFORMING MOMENTS: USING THE STUFF THAT HAPPENS IN THE ROOM

The stories we draw on to explain our past and present relationship experiences together with future aspirations or dreads can act to limit us and at times, persecute us. These stories reach our consciousness after travelling through numerous invisible screens and filters. Although the screen and filters remain hidden to us, from time to time we experience the leaking through of memories, thoughts, feelings and body experiences that contradict what has been previously thought of as a true and intricate part 'of the self' or the 'other'.

These experiences can be generated, named, held and contextually explored within therapeutic settings. Present moment experiences that occur within the therapeutic context provides all participants with dynamic life-changing opportunities for creating and resource new storylines.

Throughout the workshop I will demonstrate the skills that assist me to generate, notice and contextually explore these storylines. I will draw on examples from the therapeutic work with young people, couples and individuals.

(3)

CONSTRUCTING CHANGE-MAKING NARRATIVES WITH COUPLES

In this workshop we will practice generating change-making opportunities by working with the tensions and differences that occur in the room. I will emphasize the practical skills I use to generate experiences of movement for couples. This sense of movement inevitably creates opportunities for therapists to highlight agency, ideas and practices that are supportive of change.

I will demonstrate that new story-lines can come into existence as we notice, name and explore direct experience.

(4)

WORKING WITH COUPLES: WE TALK, WE LISTEN BUT DO WE UNDERSTAND

We often meet couples who are struggling to find any common ground in respect to understanding past events. Consequently, we can find ourselves managing a conversation shaped by accusation and counter-accusation. In this workshop I will discuss and demonstrate a conversational process that allows us to step away from accusation in order to find a third way. The third way incorporates each person's experience while exploring the sometimes complex and contradictory moments which occur within relationships.

By using a process that emphasises a relational perspective, we can explore and renegotiate the taken-for-granted notions which act to shape relationships.

Throughout this presentation I will demonstrate a therapeutic process where I engage couples in addressing serious concerns such as, significant betrayals of trust, longstanding conflicts, the impact of losses and grief, and the negotiation of change in relationships.

(5)

'IS THIS WINDOW BULLET-PROOF?' NOTICING AND MAKING THE DIFFERENCE IN CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

In many institutions this question, 'Is this window bullet-proof?' will be collected and used as evidence of a disorder. In contrast, I consider this question offers us an opportunity to discover the world the young person is inhabiting. Through a discovery process that emphasises agency, movement and relational subjectivity we (young person and therapist) can find and generate story-lines that are life-enhancing. I believe the experiential nature of therapeutic conversations can provide us with many opportunities to transform the narratives that are limiting young peoples lives.

In this workshop I will demonstrate the skills that help us shift the way we listen, enquire and interact with young people and their families.

(6)

ISN'T THIS A LEADING QUESTION?

The comment, 'Isn't this a leading question?' frequently occurs as people reflect on interviews I've facilitated. It implies that 'leading' is problematic, even perhaps an abuse of power. I have found it curious that those people who notice 'the leading question' rarely hear, notice or highlight the person's (client's) response to this question and my subsequent response to this.

I believe effective therapists do not follow behind the other's (clients') conversational direction nor do we race ahead. Instead the conversational process is akin to an intrinsic weave where conversational threads are either offered and declined or used in the weave that constructs personal and professional narratives.

When I review transcripts I notice that therapists commonly reflect back the comments people (clients) have made. This practice reproduces a known and familiar life narrative. The effect of having this familiar narrative witnessed by another may create opportunities for change. This type of witnessing is however insufficient in instances where people's persecutory narratives are shaped by often invisible contextual forces.

In this workshop we will focus on the following:

- Creating an active collaborative process rather than participating in a passive following process.
- Developing skills to relationally conceptualise life events as described by others.
- Developing skills to recursively move between noticing direct experience to reflecting on this experience.

(7)

EXTENDING PRACTICE THROUGH SUPER-VISION

I have experienced many challenges while facilitating super-vision relationships. The situations that I have found most taxing involved my use of the power relation to address ethical concerns. In these instances a relational perspective supported me to navigate a process that could have easily floundered in a mire of defensiveness, accusation, shame, anger and subsequent detachment. Through the years, I have at times struggled to construct environments that promoted extension and challenge while at the same time affirming competence. I now feel easier about the ability I have to maintain this balance. I hope the ideas presented here will assist people to facilitate environments where there is a balance between nourishment and extension.

Throughout the workshop I will discuss and demonstrate the following:

- The use of Prismatic dialogue as a reflective practice.
- Ways to negotiate accountability within a power relation.
- The use of imaginative abilities to support new therapeutic directions.
- Ethical review through a conversational process.

This workshop is relevant to people who facilitate super-vision relationships or participate in peer consultation processes.

(8)

CREATING STORYLINES IN THE HERE AND NOW: WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS

Talking about living in the present moment is easier than experientially inhabiting the present moment.

In this workshop I will discuss and demonstrate the method I use to notice, describe and research present moment experience. Noticing and then finding expressions to represent feelings and experiences (including body experiences) provides us with the opportunity to narrow the 'meaning gulf' between all participants in therapeutic and supervision relationships. This in turn allows people to both connect with their resources and address their problems.

Working with present moment experience is particularly relevant in the work with people who have suffered traumatic injuries in past and present relationships.

(9)

TALK THAT SINGS: EXTENDING THE NARRATIVE TRADITION

Throughout this workshop I will draw on examples of individual, couple and family work.

I will demonstrate those practical skills that enable us to discover people's resources, strengths and abilities while also incorporating their struggles, disappointments and despair.

I will particularly focus on creating therapeutic change by doing the following:

- Positioning people's experience within a contextual environment. I do this through an exploration of feelings, thoughts, experiences, actions, the body and relationships.
- Finding and developing people's resources through emphasising a relational style of listening and questioning.
- Developing a style of enquiry which creates change-making possibilities by using the imagination and movement over time.
- Developing the technical ability to use the therapeutic relationship as a site for discovery. This includes positioning ourselves to make discovery with people even in those difficult circumstances where change seems elusive.
- Situating respect and collaboration as a living practice that is negotiated within the therapeutic conversation.
- Holding change-making discoveries in and outside of sessions. This includes letter-writing.

(10)

ADVANCING THERAPEUTIC CONVERSATIONS

Advancing Therapeutic Conversations is orientated toward enhancing participants therapeutic skills. Consequently, people can and have attended this workshop many times with the intention of extending and developing particular therapeutic practices in a safe environment. Throughout this workshop I will discuss and demonstrate the practices I use to develop a context where possibilities for change are made or constructed with people.

These practices include the following:

- Discovering new possibilities through a focus on present-moment experience.
- Creating the experience of movement and thus change through the therapeutic conversation.
- Moving the theoretical constructs held by the therapist into a living practice.
- Exposing the binary positions that trap people within pathologising narratives.
- Negotiating and exploring the contradictory experiences that challenge rigid gender, class and culture categories.
- Extending the therapist's imaginative resource.
- Negotiating ethical positions with people (clients), e.g. therapeutic relationship boundaries.
- Working with stuck places in the therapy.

The practical skills we need to conduct a resource-centred interview will be emphasised through the use of DVDs, transcripts and prismatic dialogue.

11.

VITAL REFLECTION

Clinicians often comment that there is barely enough time in super-vision to briefly overview the dilemmas, struggles and joys they've encountered in therapeutic work. Clinicians generally settle on using the limited super-vision time to review those issues that feel urgent. Consequently, the commonly uttered lament, 'I don't have enough time to reflect on my work,' attests to many lost opportunities to reflect on both, what's working and what's not.

This precarious situation can be avoided by employing practices that position us (the clinician) as reflecting on the relational environment. In super-vision, I use prismatic dialogue to advance this reflective position. However in this workshop I will be discussing a process that I've developed to enable clinicians to ethically review and extend therapeutic practice between super-vision sessions. This vital reflection tool will enable you to review the presuppositions that are shaping therapeutic or super-vision conversations while developing new directions for enquiry.

12.

VITAL REFLECTIONS: A PROBLEM-SOLVING MANAGEMENT TOOL

Everyone would agree with the premise, '*People are an organisation's greatest resource*'. Yet in practice, this expensive resource is frequently squandered. Culpability for this situation often lies with people's ability to successfully resolve conflict.

Consequently I've developed an easy to use tool to address this problem. This 'Vital Reflections' tool will enable managers and organisational leaders to step back from a conflictual situation and discover new perspectives that are generative of *creative solutions*.

During the workshop I will demonstrate and assist others to use the 'Vital Reflection' tool. Familiarity with this tool will assist workshop participants to develop practical strategies for resolving differences and reducing conflict.