

Connecting to the muses

We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. Pablo Picasso

We set out to bring into being a *Creative Methods* issue to inform and support researchers, practitioners, educators, and those they serve. We did so with what William Blake called “a firm persuasion” (Whyte, 2001, p. 3), and in the process of expanding the evidence-base for creative methods in guidance and counselling we are affirmed that this is both essential and rewarding.

In our call for papers, we identified a number of reasons that creative methods are essential to guidance and counselling; for instance, they reintroduce playfulness, which is an often-undervalued capacity of humans that can help create space to respond to serious questions. Creative methods also allow us to be less resistant to so-called “negative” feelings and they let us break rank with the rational linear thinking, planning, efficiency and goal-orientation that has dominated policy and some practice discourses. In essence, this has suppressed the creative, sensory and feeling side of human needs and behaviours. Indeed a common theme that appeared in all the articles is the importance of making room for the affective, before connecting that with more cognitive articulations.

It is only by embodying feelings and putting words to what happens that people can make use of what they learn about themselves and others. Fundamentally creative work bridges a gap we experience between a sense of being both an “I” and a “me” and helps us make meaning out of experience – in particular when we perceive things to be discordant in our relationships with ourselves, others, and the wider world.

The methods described in the following articles may sound new to some, but this is likely because educational practice is still frequently associated with reproductive modes of working and knowing. As counsellors, guidance professionals, educators and students in the field of human development, there is still a tendency to focus on “information provision” and “knowledge transfer” and “skill building” as if by default. The invitation that creative methods offer is to work differently – to shift to more meaning-oriented modes of learning. This requires reflexive practice, tuning in, and being both associative and structured in our responses. Ultimately, people will access and construct personal wisdom by listening in, hearing the body speak, following their creative urges (or nurturing the tiny first whisperings of such urges). In this way, people have the opportunity to develop a stronger inner voice or clear whatever is in the way. As the title of our editorial suggests, we can benefit profoundly from “connecting to the muses”.

This issue of the journal begins with the creative method, Embodied Theatre Ecology, where authors Frantzich and Fels show the importance of the somatic in psychotherapy and provide a variety of activities that a counsellor can do within

therapy when words fall short. This method intends to “bridge the gap between lived experience and the words we have to express that lived experience”. Snippets of “Nell’s” (a client), story are told and how for instance she might use “body as an ear” or work with “evocative objects”.

In the second article in this collection, Ramsey-Wade and Devine explore the potential of using poetry therapy as a way to work with those with anorexia. They provide a thorough description of the poetry-therapy field and research in the area of writing for personal development, both which have developed extensively over the last 50 years. The article includes the personal story of one of the authors, showing how poetry helped her put words to feelings that she experienced as bodily discomfort, where bodily sensations and emotions felt like weapons and not resources.

Wright’s article is third in this issue and addresses the world of work, in particular leaving the “warm bathwater” of paid work. What does this mean for someone’s sense of self and personal story? Here writing for therapeutic purposes is the methodology and the reader will see how “Images in creative writing can help individuals to connect with feelings that they are not consciously aware of, connect with themselves and with others”.

This article is followed by Lee’s work which makes use of a playwriting format to get across the idea that one of the risks of using case studies is that it reduces clients to their problems and therapists to a summation of their credentials and professional experience. Lee helps us instead to become aware of a “co-existence criterion” and does this in dialogue with “Kate” who is in therapy. Lee speaks about a warmth in the work they do together and she ends with the question, does what I’m doing “permit me to go into dialogue?” inviting others to consider this as well.

Next is a consideration of the ideas of author and educator De Ronde who takes his coaches into the woods for a walk and a talk and initiates an embodied conversation process with prompts from Little Red Riding Hood. He proposes that the danger of reflection is that we see ourselves as objects we can reflect upon and this creates a division “between human and nature, and between the person and him - or herself” which can “be a source of alienation and depression, because it fractures a more primitive connection between the self and nature”. His remedy is this unique coaching approach, which involves a “combination of the sensation of *participation mystique* with the ability to reflexively find one’s own path of life”.

McClocklin and Lengelle’s article follows with an exploration of grieving and how poetry can become an important way of expressing pain and making sense of loss. Here the authors also examine how grieving is repressed and complicated in our society and how poetry allows for its expression. Three specific types of metaphors are explored here as well and how they might bring meaning and solace. In this article, McClocklin speaks specifically of the loss of her husband and how poetry became a way to express and make sense of his death and how the urge to write

erupted inside her.

Garwolińska, Oles and Gricman present a narrative-based creative method where images of paintings are used to explore the story of self. The material used in working with clients is a set of 100 colour copies of paintings. A person is asked to choose a number of these pictures and tell his or her life story based on the images. Like some of the other methods, the ability to speak of one's self often works better by using indirect means, whether that is a movement the body makes, a poem that emerges in the face of grief or illness, or telling one's stories in response to specific objects and images.

The final article in this collection is the work of Muijen and Brohm and it looks at "healing organizational rifts" through an Art-Dialogue method. It explains how art invokes the senses in sense-making. The authors also make a strong case for becoming "conscious, critical, cosmopolitan citizens" and breaking out of our comforting routines to take a stand in our troubled times. They advocate the development of a moral compass through a game that includes symbolic pictures, paintings, music and dialogue. As their work is more focused on what we can all do to improve life in a broader societal context, we chose to put their article as a capstone piece. After all, the creative methods that we are presenting here aim to heal and inspire the individual and are ultimately intended to serve the greater whole.

Finally, we are grateful to our inspiring authors and are happy to announce that the call for this special issue drew so much attention that in 2019 we will publish a second issue of this Creative Methods theme.

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