

Extending the Relational frame, 2023

A discovery orientation learning process: 6 meetings between May 2023 to December 2023

The heart and mind of the story

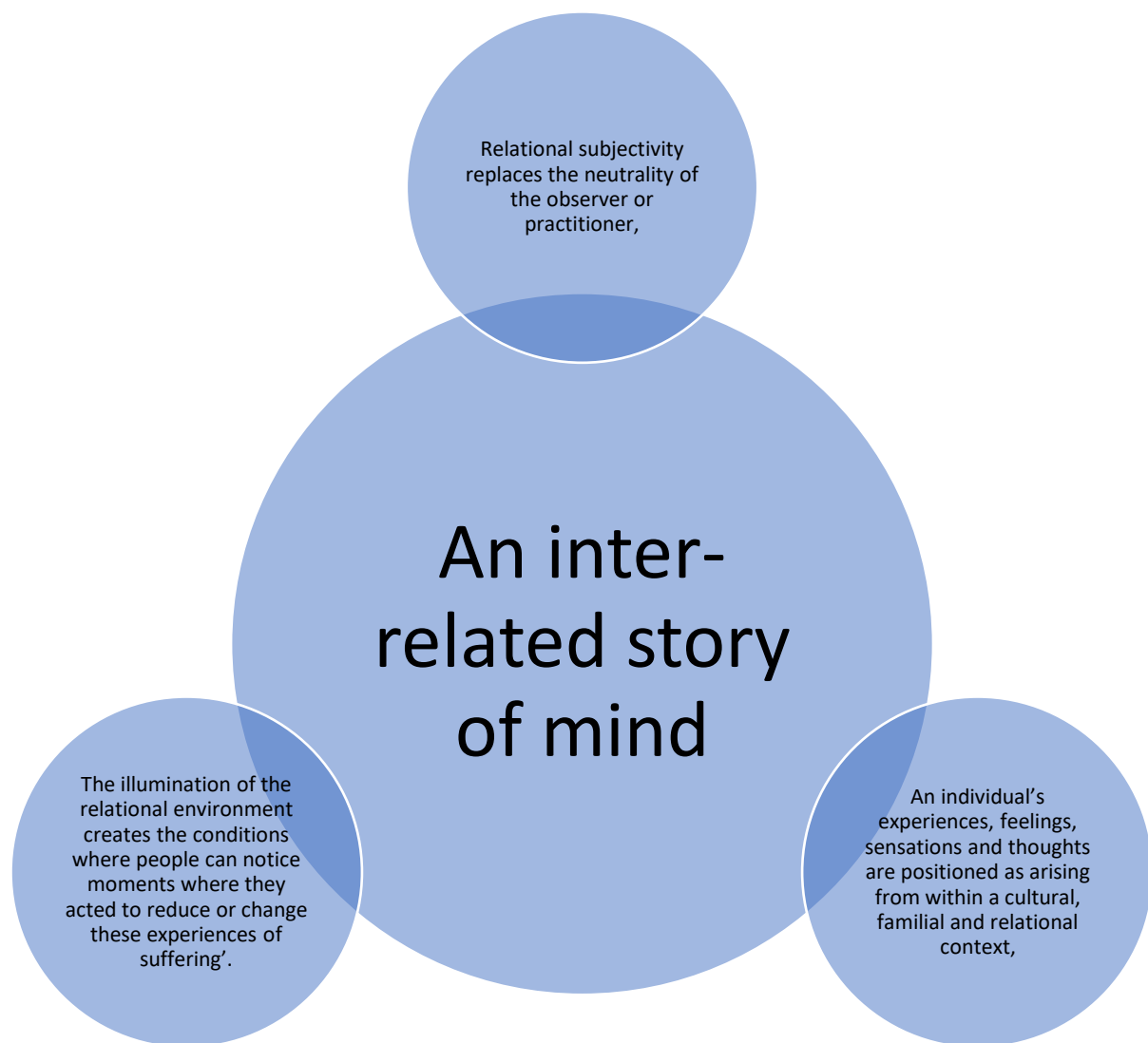


On the eve of my 20th birthday, I ‘retired’ my ancient large black pushbike replacing it with a red, brand new 100 cc motorbike. I decided as a responsible owner of this beautiful machine to familiarise myself with the mysteries of its engine. This required me to challenge a family tradition of believing the internal workings of engines was an expertise belonging solely to mechanics. I told myself it couldn’t be too difficult, picked up the manual and removed the engine from its mounting. I took the engine apart then followed a step-by-step rebuilding process. When all engine components were once again safely encased, I sighed with relief. I had passed a self -inflicted test knowing I would never do this again. I stood, turned and behind me on the newspaper was a small bolt, a small but vital bolt. I felt panic stricken, where had it come from and where would it go?. There was no escape. I took up my tools and returned to page 1 of the manual.

In a similar fashion, since late 1980’s I have attempted to describe and share the processes I use to enable people to find and experience explanations or ‘stories’ that produce the capacity to resiliently live with painful life events. Every time I produced a teaching resource I momentarily relaxed as I thought, ‘*this is it, the ‘missing bolt ‘*. Yet, in the time it took to turn around, there it was again, an essential ‘*something*’ that remained outside of the story’s ‘chassis’. I noticed how hard it was for practitioners to reproduce the discoveries they’d made in my workshops after returning to their workplaces. Their struggles drove me to pursue greater clarity through using stories, theory and demonstrations. This quest finally staggered to a halt with the distressing realisation that for a number of years I had simply been ‘moving the deckchairs around my own Titanic’. I stopped teaching, embraced my

sense of powerlessness and surprisingly discovered the mind-space I needed to notice and articulate the Relational Narrative frame.

I believe using the Relational Narrative frame, represented below provides us with a collaborative narrative process for transforming suffering into manageable pain.



An inter-related story of mind produces the conditions where it's possible for the rational aspect of mind to dynamically interact or dance with the experiential/ sensual aspect of mind. This process opens the door to the narrative prison constructed when our immersion within the institutionally -supported story of mind requires us to subjugate one aspect of mind while elevating the other.

The learning process I am offering

All learning processes are disruptive and consequently uncomfortable at times. After 40 years I still find myself wondering, 'why have I done this?' and 'why am I continuing to do this?' In response to these questions, I realised intrigue has always 'trumped' disturbance and despair. I have remained intrigued over the years by the impact of exposing interactional processes that both imprison and liberate people from suffering. I remain fascinated by the influence of the stories we are immersed in and the stories we use to make sense of experiences, sensations, feelings, what is said, implied or not said. Engaging with this mystery has been more important to me than the fear of discomfort or the desire for comfort and I hope intrigue is also more important for you.

After 40 years of clinical re-search I am convinced that the story producing and reproducing people's suffering can be changed by prioritising a discovery process that generates the following -:

- A uniquely, personal narrative that is intellectual and experientially coherent,
- Woven within this narrative is evidence confirming and producing a sense of personal agency,
- This plausible or believable narrative illuminates a direction for experimenting with change,
- Experimenting with change requires a team approach and 'a discovery, no failure', orientation.

The learning process I am offering will hopefully assist you to facilitate this kind of interactional process.

The enrolment process: The deadline for enrolment is the 17th of March 2023

I want this learning experience to reflect a practical, discovery-orientated process. Consequently, enrolment and acceptance hinges on your willingness to provide me with your responses to the following -:

- What has been the past and present focus of your clinical, super-vision work or other work?
- What do you hope the focus will be in the future?

- Review any resources you have of mine (including the notes you took at any of my workshops you've attended). Listen again to the audio recordings series, '*covid conversations*' and additional audio recordings available on my website under free resources.
- After re-viewing these resources identify ideas or practices that continue to challenge, mystify or elude you. Use a practice based example to illustrate this.
- After completing this learning process,
 - What do you hope will have changed?
 - What changes do you hope the people in your life will have noticed?
 - What changes do you hope the people you work with will have noticed?

I will review people's responses to these questions and then decide if this learning opportunity is a fit for you. I will send material (including exercises) every month using both a written and audio format. This learning process, like every learning process requires time. Consequently, you will need to set aside time to read or listen to material in preparation for both online peer conversations and my reflections and responses to these conversations.

The format

On [May the 17th 2023](#) all participants will meet on-line for 2hrs. This meeting will introduce participants to both the learning process and to each other. Each month will include the following -:

- Week 1: Participants will receive access to a written document supported by 1 or 2 audio reflections. I will provide exercises and practical examples by using clinical, super-vision or teaching observations or conversations.
- Week 2: Peer groups (2 to 3 people) will meet for 1hr approximately 1 week after receiving this material. In this meeting (using technology or face to face) people who will share their initial discoveries and challenges.
- Week 3: Peer groups (2 to 3 people) will meet again for 1 hr to share any discoveries and challenges they have encountered from either completing the exercises or introducing these practices into their work. This exploration will enable participants to shape practice- orientated questions that are subsequently sent to me. It would be useful (although this isn't a requirement) to receive fragments of transcript to support any questions. I will choose the questions that represent most people's struggles.

- Week 4: We will meet for 2 hours as a small or large group using technology and I will respond to the questions I have chosen. The last meeting of the year may be longer.

Monthly Topics

The topics below may be adapted to meet the needs of the group.

Month 1: Introduction.

Introducing or Preparing to discover the Relational Narrative frame. Before meeting please review the document and any audio-recordings I have sent.

Month 2: An exploration of the inter-related story of mind.

An exploration of the inter-related story of mind will take place through identifying and engaging with the interactional processes that shape peoples experiences of Hope, Trust, Respect, Love and Safety. The presence and loss of these experiences has a significant impact on the viability of all relationships and produces individual experiences of ecstasy as well as suffering. This exploration will disturb the Institutionally supported theory of mind and this disturbance allows us access a treasure trove of new narrative possibilities. These new narrative possibilities provide people with an escape or an exit from a judgemental, critical, blaming and reactive maze where they have attempt to use their rational aspect of mind to control those experiences they abhor or are embarrassed by.

Month 3: Stories matter.

An exploration of how to stretch across the divide generated when available descriptions for life experiences fail to meet people's 'messy', complex and contradictory life experiences. Using the Relational Narrative Frame to 'story' these experiences provides people with the capacity to bridge the space between what is known yet defies description. This month has a focus on developing a 'storying' process that assists people to create this story- bridge with people. This kind of story-bridge allows people to safely traverse the space generated by silence, secrecy, contradictions and generalisations.

Month 4: Echo's from the past.

We've all heard things like, 'every day is a new day', or 'the past is in the past', or 'try to stay in the present moment'. All of these sayings are a little bit true and a little bit false. It's

true that you are here now from the moment you open your eyes in the morning. It's also true that ruminations about anything and everything can rob you of that 'being in the here and now moment'. It's also true that everything you experience, think or feel in this moment can be influenced by the stories you carry from the past. Using a process to relationally position reactions, responses, experiences, feelings and sensations provides us with a portal through which we can glimpse the ongoing influence of the past. This glimpse challenges the 'truth' of the story we are using to make-sense of these reactions, responses, experiences, feelings and sensations.

Month 5: The impact of several minds interacting.

The fact that Human-beings inhabit physical bodies distracts us from speculating about or re-viewing 'How' we use our senses to reach into the space between distinct physical bodies. The information we receive from our senses has for centuries been either elevated as 'the truth' or dismissed as a distraction from the 'truth'. The stories people construct to confirm the legitimacy or not of the information received from the senses has produced an estrangement from ourselves and others. However, when our responses and reactions to the information received from our senses is relationally described, positioned and explored, this enables us to notice the existence of this relational space. This relational space is always present and influential, yet its influence remains obscured by institutionally supported 'theories of mind' and the conventions of language-use. This topic is particularly relevant for the work with relationship difficulties.

Month 6: A focus on creating change.

After 40 years of clinical re-search I am convinced that we can change the story producing and reproducing peoples suffering by prioritising a process that generates the following -:

- A coherent explanation for the person's experiences of suffering,
- The person experiences this uniquely personal narrative as intellectually and experientially coherent,
- Woven within this narrative is evidence confirming and producing a sense of personal agency,
- This plausible or believable narrative illuminates a direction for experimenting with change,
- Any changes that are developed or suggested are experienced as possible and manageable.
- There is a focus on doing or acting e.g. managing the physiological impact of fear.
- The process of experimenting with change includes a supportive team approach and a no failure position. This position orientates people toward a uniquely personal discovery process and away from the paralysing impact of judgement and criticism.
- There is a focus on discovering what supports and what limits any movement toward change.

Please note: The first 6 dot points will have been covered in the previous 5 months.

Dates and Time: 6pm to 8pm on a Wednesday

Term 1:

May 17th

June 14th

July 12th

Term 2:

20th Sept

18th Oct

13th December

Nuts and Bolts

- The deadline for enrolment is [March 17th 2023](#).
- Acceptance of enrolment will be by [the 18th of April 2023](#).
- [On May the 17th](#) we will all meet on-line for 2hrs.
- The learning process will begin in May and end in December 13th 2023.
- Reviewing your responses will assist me to shape peer groups that fit for you.
- If your responses indicate a lack of synergy with the majority of respondents I can meet with you using technology to outline another learning process. If you agree to this meeting there will be an initial fee equivalent to 1 hour of super-vision.

- People who want to participate will need to commit to a peer group process. In many instances 2022 participants found the peer group an essential part of their learning process.
- [On July 21st](#) you will send me a reflection document (2000 words or less) exploring the discoveries you've made through applying these new practices in your clinical work. I suggest you use small snippets of dialogue to illustrate these discoveries.
- [On the 11th of December](#) you will send me another reflection (2000 words or less) on an area of interest you would like to continue to explore. Once again, I suggest you use small snippets of dialogue to illustrate concepts.
- Groups living in the same city or working in the same organisation can apply as a group.
- Time zones can be an issue and this will be taken into consideration before I agree to join people in this learning process.
- Groups will have between 6 to 10 participants.

Fees

An individual monthly fee of \$210. This fee includes audio, written material, meetings and responses.

[Please note: this is a 6 month commitment.](#)