

A Heuristic Study into the Development of Personal Presence for Change Agents

Jan Storey



**Dissertation submission for a
Master of Science Degree
in Change Agent Skills and Strategies
University of Surrey**

Tutor: Dr Paul Barber
(Human Potential Research Group)
December 1994

Abstract

This document represents the final submission for a Master of Science Degree.

Using an heuristic research process (where the researcher's own thoughts and feelings inform her on the chosen topic and combine with data from outside sources), the author examines the phenomenon of personal presence. This examination is undertaken with focus on the presence development needs of those working in the field of change. Such individuals may be teachers, doctors, counsellors, facilitators, leaders in commerce and industry, parents: anyone who is attempting to grow people and processes, or improve situations.

The author began her work by inquiring into the nature of presence: what is it; is it about learned behaviours; is it 'teachable', or is it present and unalterable from birth and therefore not 'developable'?

Jan Storey has worked with co-researchers through questionnaires, groupwork and one-to-one interviews to help gather her data. She examines current literature sources and examines these critically on the criteria of accessibility and readability.

The information in this document is represented in text, illustration, poetry, and live interview material. It is a study that raises as many questions as it attempts to give answers to, and the author would welcome comment from, and discussion with, others interested in her field of research.

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Jan Storey

Jan Storey
www.knowthyselfconsulting.com

Acknowledgements and Thanks

To my Mum who would have liked to see this, to John for his patience and support, to Louisa who has nagged me to get on with it, to Jenny who always understood and inspired me with her own success, to Jacqui for the ‘supervisions’, to Lesley G. for helping me to ‘stay in’, to Claire, to Amelia, Lynne, Paul B., Paul T., John M. and Josie, to David, Pamela, Kay, ‘Stephanie’, Clive, Warren, Joanna, Greg, Val, Davidia, John Nix, Janet, Mary, Sally, Nuala and Don, Pauline, Graham, to Judi who made research live for me, to Peter, Edmund, April, Rose, Michael, to Di and Helen who typed the diagrams, to John, Cathy, Jacqueline, Petruska, Sarah, Mary, Brian, Neil, to my case discussion group members and supervisor Elizabeth at Relate, to my clients and students plus everyone else who has taken part in my research. Bless you all.



Ode to my Dissertation Tutor – Paul Barber

Initially
he said to me
it is a little light.
My stomach turned
intestines churned.
The timescales were so tight!

What right has he
to talk to me
of notable omissions?
I cannot cope
There's not a hope
of meeting the conditions!

Eventually
I was to see
things go from bad to worse.
The dissertation
my prized creation
was 'referenceless' and cursed!

One day to go.
I do not know
how I am going to end it.
Oh what the hell
I might as well
just pack it up and send it!

A HEURISTIC STUDY INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL PRESENCE FOR CHANGE AGENTS

INTRODUCTION

Thinking back, I have been interested in the subject of presence since I was a little girl when I overheard a group of relatives discussing me and declaring that I was 'fey'. I looked up this old Scottish word and found that it meant 'the condition of having a strange whimsical charm; a curious presence'. Content that I had not been insulted by my family and pleased with my slight out-of-ordinariness, I let the matter rest until just before my 40th birthday, when the subject of presence came up for me again.

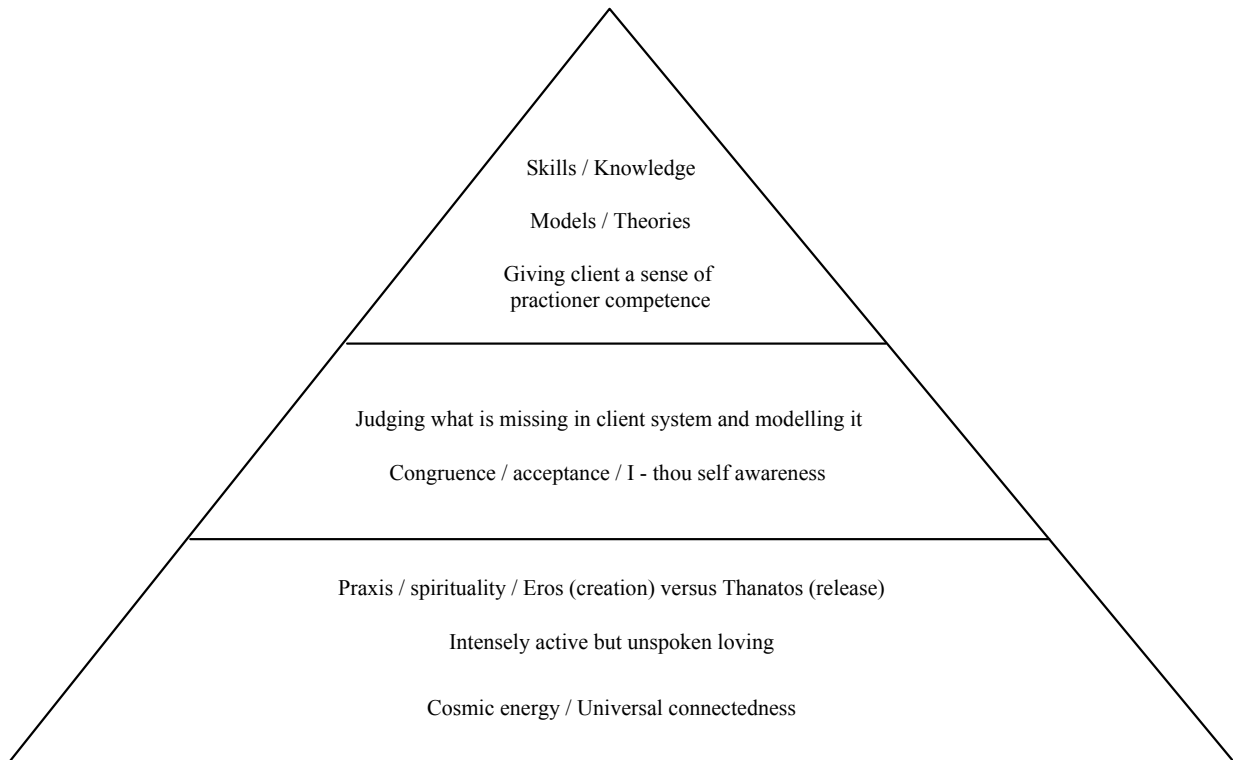
Attending a course designed for facilitators and change agents at the Tavistock Institute I heard much talk of presence. This time I heard it spoken of as 'the way a change agent is' that enhances the practitioner/client relationship; a certain 'je ne sais quoiness' composed of ephemeral things such as empathy, acceptance, client-valuing: difficult to measure and attain, but oh so easy to spot in absence.

In 1992 two significant things happened that rekindled and reintensified by interest in the phenomenon of personal presence. The first was an invitation to tutor and provide supervision for a 2-year diploma course for Counsellors in the Workplace run by the Roehampton Institute. The second was being accepted as a student on an MSc course entitled Change Agent Skills and Strategies at Surrey University.

In my role as tutor, I have frequently been asked by my students to define presence. Initially I offered them Rogers' (1962) definition of presence 'an acceptant/democratic attitude which is helpful for facilitating growth'.

Whilst I do not disagree with this view, it never seemed to go far enough, nor did it seem particularly helpful in guiding students towards developing presence or giving clues about what conditions need to be operating for this growth to take place. In mid-1993 I decided to attempt to produce a diagrammatic definition that represented personal presence as I saw it at that stage in my research. (See Figure 1.) This paper starts from a standpoint of wanting to test out my model with change agents in the field to see how it works in practice.

Figure 1 *Hierarchy of Presence*



As an MSc student in a collaborative learning environment, feedback suggested that my own personal presence was significant; often positive but sometimes distracting, in terms of my work with individuals, groups and organisations. It needed only this touch of the personal to reattach my attention to the subject of presence and for the last six months I have observed, questioned, journalled, argued and immersed myself in this area of the change agent's practice.

An internal dialogue written down in my journal a year ago goes as follows and may help the reader to better understand my approach to this piece of work and how I came to start it.

Jan So you want to examine 'presence' do you; to take it apart and make it complicated?

Jan Elizabeth Yes, it feels important to me and is beginning to take up a lot of thinking time. I want to turn it round in my hands and see the other side of it. I think it will turn out to be both more complicated and more simple than is generally thought.

- Jan* Lots of good people have worked in this area already, so what can you add?
- Jan Elizabeth* I agree that lots of good people have said it's important to have presence, but I want to know to what extent it can be taught, learnt and known and what bits you are born with.
- Jan* It sounds as if you want to write a manual for tutors?
- Jan Elizabeth* Well perhaps one day I will – and for students too – but before I can do that I want to know what language I could use to talk about presence that would mean something to other people.
- Jan* You mean technical language, psycho-babble, facilitator-speak or what?
- Jan Elizabeth* That's precisely the problem: how do you write about a phenomenon as ephemeral as presence in language that can generally be understood by all sorts of people?
- Jan* OK, so now you're rushing on a bit, trying to decide how you will write about things before you've really decided what you want to know!
- Jan Elizabeth* Sorry; that's because I find this subject so exciting. But you are wrong about me not knowing what I want to know. It's just like you to put me down!
- Jan* Don't be so sensitive: it's my job to challenge you and introduce some discipline into your inquiry. So tell me then, what do you want to know about presence?
- Jan Elizabeth* I really want to know whether the quality of presence is synonymous with the level of personal development reached by the change agent. And if it is, what sort of manifestation of human development is it?
- Jan* That will keep you busy for a while; anything else you want to know?
- Jan Elizabeth* I have a question about whether presence is or should be affected by the sort of work to be done? Are the models and theories being used likely to affect a practitioner's presence, or will the quality of that presence help to decide what models and theories the practitioner is competent and comfortable to use?

Jan This begins to sound like a BIG piece of work to me. Why don't you make it the subject of your dissertation?

Jan Elizabeth I suppose I've been waiting for your permission to do that, but it feels multi-faceted and hard to get hold of.

Jan Well, you've already had a first stab at giving the subject shape and I don't believe we're going to get any peace round here until this work is done, so I'll help you. Go to sleep now.

Jan Elizabeth Thank you. Goodnight.

Conversations with myself like the one above made me realise how connected I am with my subject and how much of my initial data is already within me. The challenge will be to deepen and test this by almost 'becoming' the phenomenon of personal presence myself and using a research method that lends itself both to my interest area and my personal style.

CHAPTER 1

Presence – Finding the Right Research Method

My first task was to decide which research method I would use. I initially considered action or cooperative inquiry as involving types of research but rejected these methodologies because their research cycles tend to be ‘horizontal’. By this I mean that cycles such as agreeing what to research, doing what has been agreed, experiential participation, critical reflection and revision of cycling in the light of experience follow chronologically, steadily and separately, one after the other – a bit like applying layers of icing to a cake.

Because I am researching a human experience that I too share, I feel I need to be more flexible in the direction of my cycling: I need to be able to research down through the grain of my cycles – vertically – as well as horizontally; a slice through the cake and layers of icing. For example, whilst working on presence with a group of co-researchers, I might become conscious that my own presence is having a particular effect on the proceedings. I may notice certain feelings about this situation grow inside me. Possibly I may need to hold all these thoughts and feelings in my awareness while I decide what adjustments to my presenting style I need to make. I may also wish to make the situation known to my co-researchers once I have decided what the intention behind this disclosure might be. At the same time I might need to decide what this sequence of awarenesses might mean in terms of the research overall.

This type of multiple awareness is described by William Torbert (1992) as integrative awareness – awareness in the here and now – awareness in the moment. I believed that my work with presence would benefit from this type of awareness if I could find a research method that would make the most of its immediacy. In a conversation with Peter Reason at the Bath Conference he offered the idea that researchers who use integrative awareness processes naturally have difficulty with the chronology of cooperative or action inquiry. My understanding of this insight is that by using integrative awareness such researchers do gather all the information required by these methodologies. However, the cycles are not always recognisable to those who prefer horizontal cycling and are therefore sometimes seen as invalid.

With this in mind I started to search for a method that would be both flexible enough for creative cycling and disciplined enough to contain the work and maintain validity.

After a discussion about the difficulty of validating personal experiences in a previous piece of research work, my tutor for that project at Surrey University, Josie Gregory introduced me to heuristic research and the work of Clark

Moustakas. Moustakas (1990) describes a research method that allows (and in fact demands) that the ‘self’ of the researcher be present throughout the investigative process in order to deepen understanding of the phenomenon through self-awareness and self-knowledge.

The framework that disciplines and shapes Moustakas’ work is composed of six unfolding phases; each of which demands mindful attention of the researcher as she moves through her investigation.

Phase 1: Initial engagement

This phase requires the researcher to identify her passions and intense interests, her most pressing autobiographical questions and the social implications of these.

Self dialogue, such as the conversation with myself documented in earlier pages, forms an important part of this phase, as does an intuitive feeling of getting ‘warm’ around finding exactly the RIGHT question.

A growing sense of the need for the work to be done at all, both from the point of view of the researcher’s inquisitiveness around her subject and the wider, social or universal context, begin to lend an almost irrepressible energy to the task. In my case, my early curiosity and interest in presence was rearoused when my students and MSc peers almost unanimously decided on the one hand that to have a well-development presence was vital, but that exactly how such development was to occur (or indeed what exactly was to be developed), was not clearly understood, nor did there seem to be a shared language with which to do this.

My assumption during this phase of initial engagement is that although work on presence has indeed been carried out by many notable people in the field (see Chapter 6), it is not seen as helpful enough, user friendly enough, accessible enough or integrated enough to be used readily by those in training or those training change agents.

Reaching inwards for tacit knowledge as I work, I become aware of the grandiosity of this early assumption and feel the humbling effect of this insight. My practical self recognises that clearer questions around the subject of presence are now beginning to form, such as ‘what is it’, ‘how can we talk about it’ and ‘how does it develop’. At this phase the work begins to seem less amorphous, huge and indistinct and more focussed and directional. The primary question begins to emerge as ‘is it possible to raise interest and awareness in the subject of presence in ‘the field’ and find ways of developing such awarenesses with my co-researchers?’

Phase 2: Immersion

When the researcher is clear about which questions she requires answers to in her investigation, she begins to 'live' her research. For me this has taken the form of noticing the unique presence of everyone I meet and noticing how I sense this; looking for unusual sources of presence in buildings, paintings and music; meditating on the theme; feeling the presence in natural things and creatures (like trees, mountains and animals); getting feedback from clients; designing questionnaires, booking dialogues with interested people, talking to strangers and keeping a journal and dream diary:

Whether or not we are great artists or scientists, many of us have experienced the surge of new ideas when writing, with the result that what we are producing develops in a completely unexpected way. But there is more to it than this, for in some cases, inspiration comes during sleep and wakes the sleeper. (Assagioli, 1988)

Friends tell me I have become 'peculiarly intense, sometimes very fully engaged and sometimes preoccupied.' They do not see this as an alteration in my presence, but rather a deepening of what was there before. It seems significant to me that my own presence should be changed by the process of researching into presence generally.

At the immersion phase I become anxious when I feel the edges of 'important' ideas nudge my mind tantalisingly and move infuriatingly out of reach for the time being. I worry that I can't quite grasp them and make them real and solid immediately. Moustakas (1990) recognises this as a phenomenon of the immersion phase that suggests a transitioning movement towards the softer focus of the next heuristic phase: incubation. I am reminded of how often I find lost objects only once I have stopped frantically searching for them and decide to retreat from the pointed, sharp focus on my subject, at least for a phase or two.

Phase 3: Incubation

This phase marks a period of time where the researcher may not seem to be so busy and outwardly preoccupied with her investigation. But at another, unseen level, much may be sorting, fermenting and growing.

If all the experiences, thoughts and bits of ideas I have collected were seeds, this would be the dark, moist sleeping time; invisible beneath the soil. I need to reassure myself that my seeds are OK – much is indeed changing – but no result is visible at the moment. For the researcher (and the seed planter) this is an anxious time. What will 'come up' if anything? What will the harvest be? I am reminded of the alchemical stage *coagulatio* which involves the earthing of material in solid form. Issues for the alchemist are around fear of limitation as the

changed entity starts slowly to solidify in new form.

During this time I wrote in my journal:

What is going on in my unconscious now? I feel low and depressed compared to the joyful business of the last phase. What is going on in my body? What embodied knowing exists already and how do I access it? For the first time I feel my 'energy' or 'life force' quite clearly and to the extent that others can feel it when I touch them. What questions does this provide answers to?

From time to time I notice that both I and my work are being quietly nourished in unexpected ways: people take such care to tell me their thoughts about presence, usually by letter or sometimes messages left on my answerphone. I often get a strong sense of the person's presence, not so much from the form of words they use, but from the way they have carefully considered the subject of presence from a uniquely personal standpoint. I realise that the heuristic process I use to investigate presence may teach me more about the subject than what is said and done during my research. Insights of this type often mark a shift into the next phase of the research process.

Phase 4: Illumination

If all goes well, this phase is a time of breakthrough into conscious awareness of new knowledge and insight, a realigning of skewed, old ways of thinking around the research topic, or a synthesis of both. For me it is a phase where I discover that I am attempting to work towards a given outcome, such as proving or disproving my model. I make adjustments towards getting back to being simply curious. This feels difficult, possibly because I have lived in a world of personal insecurity since infancy and the urge to get my dissertation all wrapped up is very strong. What part of my 'lost' self will I project onto my work?

This sort of illumination often happens when I look regularly at a familiar scene, object or person and quite suddenly become aware of some quality not previously noticed. I may be amazed that I had never noticed the object, scene or person in quite that way before and begin to ask myself the significance of the alteration. What is new in me or the other that I now see so differently? What is important about the timing of my discovery? What is the 'newness' doing or saying in my life or about my work?

Moustakas (1990), reminds me of how Archimedes had his famous Eureka moment in his familiar bath. But for the heuristic researcher, such new insights and illuminations are by no means the completion of the discovery process. The meticulous work so important in research validation begins to take place as the researcher looks both inwards to attend to judgements, beliefs and biases and

outwards towards conversations and dialogues with others in the next phase.

Phase 5: Explication

In some ways the difference between this phase and the previous one are about the degree or intensity with which the researcher examines the insights and illuminations she has had.

The questions about what is new and different ways of seeing may become the subject of dialogues with others. As researcher, I will not only notice the content of the conversations – the detailed story told by the other person – but will also indwell intensely on my feelings whilst receiving this new information and the quality of the dialogue as an experience of human presence.

Perhaps whilst in conversation with another person, I may hear something about presence that contradicts my deepest beliefs on the subject. I want to be in the position of becoming aware of my denials and biases around their views and making my emotional responses available to us both constructively and openly.

This may also be the phase where what is core and what is subsidiary to the question is identified and divided. This is attempted by a process of inner attention and focussing which enables the researcher to stay with the most important realities of her subject without becoming distracted in a destructive way. Once I have explicated the major components of my research, I shall attempt to bring them together in an interesting and appropriate way.

Phase 6: Creative synthesis

At this last phase of the investigation, the researcher should have at her disposal, all available data and material collected through personal work, dialogues and interviews with others.

Moustakas (1990), recommends a period of meditation or reflection to await the inspiration needed to decide how exactly to depict what has been discovered. This depiction is usually narrative, containing verbatim accounts, but can also be painting, poetry or stories. I shall need to be aware that the data collected is important but does not necessarily describe the ‘essence’ of my subject. My search for meaning may need to take account of the personal and the subjective, but it can also be scientific. Moustakas (1990) quotes Bridgman (1950):

The process that I want to call scientific is a process that involves the continual apprehension of meaning, the constant appraisal of significance, accompanied by a running act of checking to be sure I am doing what I want to do, and of judging

correctness or incorrectness. This checking and judging and accepting that together constitute understanding are done by me and can be done for me by no one else. They are as private as my toothache, and without them science is dead.

I believe what Bridgman has described is very similar to Torbert's (1992) process of integrative awareness; an inquiry 'hologram' which enables creative cycling and that has a unique validity in terms of working with human experience.

My co-researchers in this endeavour are members of my peer MSc group and some tutors, participants in a practicum I ran at the Bath Conference on Emerging Approaches to Creative Inquiry, counsellors in training from my supervision groups and other interested individuals. Apart from an initial intervention in the shape of a questionnaire, I have not sought input, but have waited for people to approach me. This has certainly been the case, and I have been intrigued and delighted by the number of phone calls, letters and visits from people who find the subject of presence intriguing and worthy of further thought.

Where am I now with the research as a result of the work in this chapter?

I notice at this stage, that it becomes more difficult to separate myself from my research subject and that it occupies both a large percentage of my waking thoughts and some of my sleeping ones.

Lawrence Durrell (1959) describes the feeling of merging with something else – in his case a foreign culture – in his book *Mountolive*:

Mountolive suddenly began to feel himself really penetrating a foreign country, foreign moeurs, for the first time. He felt as one always feels in such a case, namely the vertiginous pleasure of losing an old self and growing a new one to replace it. He felt he was slipping, losing so to speak, the contours of himself. He felt he had begun transplanting a whole huge intact world from his imagination into the soil of his life.

I certainly feel all the excitement of merging with my subject and being different as a result, but will *discovery* – for that is what this piece of work is about – be enough? When this work is ‘marked’ will it be found wanting in the departments of verification and corroboration? It feels as if I need courage to continue in this way; something of a shot in the dark!

At about this time, my husband’s beloved father died and in a corner of my kitchen now stands the old man’s well-used walking stick. When I hold it, I get a strong and quite ‘shocking’ sense of my father-in-law’s presence from the wood. When I doubt the need for me to investigate the phenomenon of presence, to research something safer and more concrete, or wonder at my inability to define presence in a neat statement or phrase, I hold the stick and re-experience the fundamental truth – that I am lifting just one little corner of a subject that is either so simple, or so complex that I am bound to have moments of uncertainty.

Moore (1990) (ed), seems to have some sympathy with my difficulties over defining presence:

You can give a definition of a horse, because the horse is something complex. You can give a definition of a horse, because a horse has many different properties and qualities, all of which you can enumerate. But when you have enumerated them all, when you have reduced a horse to his simplest terms, then you can no longer define those terms. They are simply something you think of or perceive, and to anyone who cannot think of or perceive them, you can never, by any definition, make the nature known.

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced as a result of the work in this chapter:

- Where a research process is based on discovery through human experience, data must be handled in such a way that validity is protected and ensured.

(See Figure 2 which illustrates how I hope to achieve this).

- I have a concern about how the work can remain ‘untainted’ by other important views so I have decided to complete the literature search after I have completed the work with co-researchers and reported their views.
- I realise that the risk with this order of things is that I might be working my way down a blind alley. However, I am aware of my tendency to consider other people’s ideas and weave them in with my own to the detriment of originality, so although I am aware that in heuristics the literature search is generally done early in the research, this seems a useful experiment to try.
- I hope to keep my work authentic by using here and now experiences, as they arise, during conversations with co-researchers, as part of the evidence I report. Moustakas (1990) is explicit about the skills needed to do this well:

In heuristic interviewing the data generated is dependent upon accurate, empathic listening, being open to oneself and to the co-researcher; being flexible and free to vary procedures to respond to what is required in the flow of dialogue and being skillful in creating a climate that encourages the co-researcher to respond comfortably, accurately, comprehensively and honestly in elucidating the phenomenon.

- I also hope that the choices over the direction of the work will be made in collaboration with co-researchers and to use straight reportage rather than interpretation for the majority of the research.
- I am becoming clear that my work does have relevance: is of use in my own practice and in the field generally. In this I am informed by:
 - the amount of feedback from my clients
 - a large number of requests to take part in the research by other change agents
 - a stated lack of knowledge about the subject by my supervisees and their desire to know more
 - a perceived lack of awareness in the field about which references exist and a disinclination to use those that do. Change agents cite ‘language difficulties’ as the reason for not finding existing references very informative.

A significant number of my co-researchers at this stage were talking to me about language; the difficulties of talking about something we all tend to perceive

differently, the difficulties of talking about a phenomenon that isn't necessarily about a physical reality alone and the perceived difficulty of finding sources of information on the subject that were not 'excluding' in terms of language.

Most people seemed to feel that finding a language to talk together about presence was a good place to start.

Figure 2 Steps in Conducting the Research and Dealing with Data

1. Decide why I want to do this research, what is its relevance to my work and life – what social relevance does it have?
2. Decide which research method will suit the subject.
3. Decide how I will attract people to me to take part in the research.
4. Make preliminary decisions about what questions I am addressing or what themes or important areas of work need attention collaboratively with co-researchers.
5. Let co-researchers know scope of work, get their agreement to begin work on that basis, send out letters, make appointments to talk to people.
6. Tape dialogues with co-researchers. Return transcripts for verification or alteration. Collect all data from each co-researcher together to build up widest possible picture of the experience of each.
7. Check with co-respondents who give permission to reprint letters how their words will be used in context of research. Give opportunity for withdrawal or alteration.
8. Set all data aside for awhile.
9. Re-immense myself in data from each person to see what themes emerge. See what ideas of document structure 'bubble up' as result of this immersion.
10. Rest with proposed structure a while to see if it makes sense.
11. Begin to synthesise in writing/illustrations/poems, working through structure systematically until all pen portraits of co-researchers and arranged within proposed structure.
12. Send written pieces of the structure (in chapter form) to relevant co-researchers, 'supervisors' and tutor to get views.
13. Do literature search.
14. Write down preliminary conclusions, do illustrations, report feelings, critically review process and decide what next steps in the work might look like.

CHAPTER 2

What ‘Language’ Can We Use To Talk about Presence?

By the summer of 1994, my work began to suggest that I needed to ask a simpler research question: how can we talk together and investigate a phenomenon as personal and individual as presence?

As an MSc student at Surrey University, I often observed the difficulties experienced by my peers when discussing personal processes or matters of their own style together. In one particular group session where we had become stuck investigating ‘how we were’ as group facilitators, I offered an exercise that I hoped would raise the energy around this task.

The exercise involved the use of colour as metaphor to enable the students to describe their presence when working with groups. I set the exercise up by describing the common properties which all colour has: depth, clarity and colour temperature (warmth/coolness). I then invited my peers to consider themselves quietly, and choose swatches of coloured fabric which best represented the qualities of their personal presence as facilitators.

The group took the exercise seriously; people appeared thoughtful and very engaged with their task as they made their choices. I wrote in my journal:

I felt very anxious starting this exercise and mumbled and fumbled all over the place. I felt instinctively that what I was going to propose was absolutely right for where the group wanted to be, but that someone powerful would try to stop me in some way. This made me nervous and rushed. P did in fact challenge me to explain how my exercise would add to what was written down in the handbook. I held my ground and explained that using the colour symbolically as an alternative language and diagnostic tool would add to the models and text in the handbook and give us a common language to begin to work together. I felt that the group had been stuck at a level of social interaction and that there was some general dissatisfaction with that. Deepening of the work and allowing a more universal and spiritual language to be used might bridge the gap imaginally between where the group were and where they seemed to want to be.

After the exercise was over people wanted to continue in small groups. Some people asked to keep their colours for a while and to think about them in relation to themselves for a little longer. Other people came back to me checking out my perceptions on their choices. Our language levels and differences were much less apparent during this exercise – people communicated from their imaginal worlds more freely and flexibly using the symbolic language of colour than we normally do in the group.

One member of the group, Jacqui Gascoyne reflects back on her colour choices over a year after the event:

My sense of doing the exercise was fascination, both for myself and for the others because their choices of colour told me where they were.

It was one of the few times over the two years of the course that the energy of the group was brought together; we were all in the same bubble and therefore we were able to start seeing each other differently; from the other person's perspective.

I remember watching X choose his colours, knowing the dichotomy in him, and watched him seeing it in himself so clearly through his colour choices.

The colour I chose was jade. It was so clear; it represented water and tranquillity and I felt I had clarity too at that time. Somehow it also represented the earth. I felt grounded and whole with it. I have used this exercise with my work on a women's development course where people were in different places. They really got into it; people were able to express their fears for the first time through the metaphor of colour.

As a result of this exercise and others carried out as experiments with my working groups, I realised that it might not be easy to talk with large numbers of people about presence without resorting to the use of symbols and metaphors. Jung (1964) acknowledges this approach when he states:

Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend.

However, Cox and Theilgaard (1987) suggest caution because:

There is always the risk that attempts to categorize the process of forming images will obscure their significance.

I took these ideas and cautions forward into the design of the questionnaire that I hoped would bring others to me to share in my work.

Getting the right balance of language for the presence questionnaire

Although questionnairing is not normally part of a heuristic process, I invited 50 people to join me in my research by this means. A number of things were important to me in the design and choice of wording for the questionnaire and covering letter.

- The words should give people a lot of choice about whether and how they took part in the research and they should not feel under pressure to do so. In this way I hoped to attract the views of people who found my subject worthwhile and interesting
- The questionnaire itself should be catalytic enough to encourage interest in

the field; it should encourage people to think about the subject whether or not they chose to respond. I wanted any responses to provide a backdrop to the subject, rather than supply vital information that needed interpretation and analysis, at least in this document. I hoped to avoid what Steiner (1978) describes as: *'The drive towards objective contemplation, logical analysis, scientific classification, which cuts us off from being'*.

- The questions should enable people to play with the subject; to have fun
- The questions should build on the findings of my previous work with metaphor, i.e. people should be free to represent their views creatively with symbols, pictures or diagrams as well as, or instead of, words if they so wished. Bruner's statement (1980): *'We have ways of using imagination to understand what can never be fully understood'*, illustrates how I hoped co-researchers would approach the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire process should encourage interested people to me to take further part in my research if they were inclined. The amount of response would indicate to me the degree to which respondents found the subject interesting or important to their practice. (This in itself has become a significant research question for me.)

I sent out 50 questionnaires to people working in the field of change. These were either my students on a 2-year Diploma course run by the Roehampton Institute for counsellors in the workplace, supervisees, peer members of my case study group at Relate, peers and tutors from the MSc at Surrey University and individuals from my own network. I was amazed and delighted to receive 46 responses (without chasing) in the form of completed questionnaires, telephone conversations and requests for face-to-face meetings. All but one person identified the questionnaire with their name and 23 respondents to questionnaires and 12 face-to-face co-researchers gave permission for me to reprint their views, under their full names, in this document.

It was also evident that many people had given a lot of time and thought to their responses and a number had 'told me off', albeit lightly. Such remarks as *'this has really made me think and given me a headache!'* were not uncommon.

A number of people mentioned that they *'had lived awhile with the subject of presence through the questionnaire'*, carrying it around with them or leaving it in an accessible place to fill in a little at a time. The state of the paper bore witness to this in some instances – some questionnaires looked as if people had eaten meals off them! 5 people mentioned that they found the questionnaire seductive in its invitation to 'play' and 31 co-researchers appreciated and took up the invitation to draw or use symbols to express their views of the subject of

presence.

Figure 3 is a collage of the symbols/diagrams/pictures sent to me by co-researchers. Some of these are unique to the individuals and others occur so often that they feel ancient: primordial/archetypal. Freud (1923) offers an explanation of why this might be:

Thinking in pictures . . . stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words and it is unquestionably older than the latter, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically.

Heuristics permits and encourages creative ways of depicting ‘portraits’ of co-researchers. The collage represents the symbolic presences, self-diagnosed, of 31 people. When a certain symbol or colour has been important to a greater number of co-researchers, I have depicted this as larger, brighter or pictorially more significant. As I agree with the lines in Emily Dickinson’s poem, (1970) that:

*The Possible’s slow fuse is lit
By the imagination,*

I have used the collage as a meditation and reflection tool during the synthesis process that has contributed to this document.



Figure 3 The collage

One piece of information gleaned from the questionnaires and conversations with co-researchers was the stated fact that few people had given serious thought to their own presence before and that therefore filling in the questionnaire was quite a challenging exercise. The exceptions to this tended to be those working in the area of the transpersonal, some Gestaltists and those concerned with some spiritual practice, art or discipline such as dancing, acting, painting or T'ai Chi.

For example, Claire Breeze defines her presence as *'the product of intentionality'*. She believes hers has changed over the years as a result of illness. Joanna Knight offers *'the projection of an individual's personality, character; their essential self – in a way that impacts on others.'* Nuala White suggests, *'an almost tangible atmosphere/energy perceived by others – a knowing – a solidity of being – a centredness'*.

John Mulligan defines presence for him as, *'the embodiment and manifestation of energy or energies, and is a function of what we are and the extent to which we have realised the potential we have for evolving and channelling these energies. It is both a function of our potential and spiritual development'*.

The above co-researchers had little or no difficulty in dialoguing with the subject, but many others, like the person who wrote *'these questions challenge my difficulty in articulating what or who I am'*, or another who wrote *'these questions are hard! I really had to think about something I don't usually think about. Having finished – now I want a dialogue to explore further'*, strengthen my assumption that little prior thinking or work in this area of personal development had been done.

Noteworthy, (I believe), also is the fact that only 3 people on their questionnaires and 2 in face to face conversations, talked about the work done by experts/authors in the field. Of these, 3 people spoke of references they had found helpful, and 2 of readings on presence they had found unhelpful. In my contact with co-researchers, this lack of awareness (or where there was awareness – lack of appreciation) of other references was quite marked. I'm puzzled by these dichotomies as a picture begins to form of a field of change where practitioners say they find the subject of presence important to their practice and interesting. On the other hand I am learning that many of the same people appear to have given little thought to the subject previously and have not been able to/or wanted to make use of the various texts already available to develop that part of themselves which now appears to intrigue them. This is a puzzle that I feel I need to hold lightly and take forward to future stages of research.

Where am I now with the research as a result of the work on this chapter?

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced as a result of the work done on this chapter:

- My work suggests that a significant number of change agents working in the field find the subject of presence sufficiently interesting / intriguing / important to give their time to take part in research into it
- A significant number of change agents working in the field have not given the subject of presence much thought before, and of these, few have given thought to presence development in terms of their lives or careers
- An overwhelming number of change agents appear to be unaware of the texts written on the subject of presence and those that are aware, often say they find the texts unhelpful
- A large number of my co-researchers found the questionnaire thought-provoking but difficult and spent a long time (one change agent reported taking 2 hours) to fill it in
- Co-researchers say they did not feel pressured into taking part in the research. Some reported finding it ‘fun’ and enjoyed playing with the subject of presence. A number reported recognising my style or presence in the way the questionnaire was presented to them
- Co-researchers appreciated the invitation to fill the questionnaire in creatively with drawings, symbols and diagrams
- The use of symbols and metaphors for presence allowed change agents from different backgrounds, using different therapeutic approaches to use a common language to work together. The commonality of language around the subject seemed to produce an enthusiasm for looking at presence that had previously been absent according to co-researchers.

Not for the first time I find myself wondering how my presence is affecting the research and to what extent it had ‘attracted’ such a large number of people who want to take part in the work. Nevis (1991), defines presence as:

The living out of values in such a way that in ‘taking a stance’ the intervenor teaches these important concepts. That which is important to the client’s learning is exuded through the consultant’s way of being.

Am I as researcher attempting to ‘take a stance’ about something I see as

important, (presence) and which I believe is generally not given enough attention in the field of change?

Mulligan (1993) comments on Nevis' statement:

He (Nevis) suggests that part of the consultant's task is to provide the kind of presence which may be lacking in the client system to enable learning to occur.

Am I as researcher, attempting to create learning in the field by modeling the kind of presence that examines and develops itself through this work?

I believe the answer to both the above questions is yes. I have brought my 'self' to this work because I see it as an act of service to the field; that I have been highly judgemental in deciding that the field needs the work done, is undoubtedly true.

I decide to be more mindfully aware of my motivations as I take the research into its next phase – some face to face groupwork at the Bath University Conference on Emerging Approaches to Inquiry.

CHAPTER 3

A Practicum at the Bath Conference on Emerging Approaches to Inquiry

In September 1994 I attended the Bath University Conference on Emerging Approaches to Inquiry run by Peter Reason and Judi Marshall. A number of participants showed a lot of interest in my research on presence, as a result of which I offered a practicum on the morning of the third day. Eight people spent the morning together, initially listening to me describe my work and afterwards in pairs exercises.

My co-researchers decided to experiment with their ability to turn their presence on and off to each other and then shared their experiences in a plenary. Each person in the pair took it in turns to ask for the presence of the other to be open or closed towards them. We decided simply to ‘be here for each other’ and to experience what occurred.

Heron (1990) talks of ‘*being here now*’ as a state that is not to do with the body, but is to do with inner alertness. He suggests that ‘*when I am awake to the moment – rather than distractedly dreaming it – I have presence.*’ He believes that when a practitioner is ‘*here now, she is also very much there now*’. In other words, when I am attuned to my own centre, I am already very open to the reality of the other. ‘*Within the I is found the Thou.*’ Heron writes that ‘*when I am here now, I have abundant free attention which is not enslaved by past, present or future content and which can dwell with and energise my client. I have active and directed presence.*’ Heron instructs us (and my research begins to confirm) that this type of presence is ‘*a subtle and intense activity of my consciousness, mediated by gaze, posture, facial expression and sometimes touch.*’

Rose Armson, of the Open University Systems Group offered what she called ‘reflective ramblings’ on what happened when her partner requested her to open her presence. In a letter to the author, which she gave permission to reprint, she reflected on her impressions of what ‘being here now’ meant for her:

My partner took the asking role first. I was sitting with my hands resting lightly on the table. ‘Be open to me.’ I looked into her eyes. They seemed full of her interest in me. Her face moved slightly – it was very animated, even when not moving. She was very beautiful in an unusual sort of way. I didn’t find myself wondering what she thought. It felt good to be able to let her see whatever she wanted to see and be open to whatever she wanted to give me.

‘Be closed to me.’ It was hard to maintain eye contact but I’d sort of gathered that what we were supposed to be exploring was simply the feeling. It would have been a cop-out to have just rocked back and gazed at the ceiling. In the end, I had to resort to focusing on the bridge of her nose; still a cop-out but not quite so bad. I turned my attention to the conversations going on around me and then to the conversations going

on inside. I was still observing her, but a bit like one observes a creepy crawly under a microscope – an object for not-very-interested study. To my horror, she had become quite ugly. The angularity of her features struck me for the first time; her mouth and nose looked hard. I couldn't believe how she had changed. Since I was free to pursue my own thoughts I thought it through. I knew that she could only have changed in response to me but it seemed unlikely that she had changed much since I was endeavouring to give away as little as possible about myself and my feelings. In any case, I also felt confident that the intimacy that was now between us meant that she was unlikely to be experiencing anything except good will towards me. It was a relief to be released.

Rose's partner describes her experiences:

I became very clear that I could turn my presence on and off; it merely needed an effort of will which included changed eye focus, lower energy and 'command thinking' of the words 'open' and 'closed' when invited by Rose. I could tell by Rose's expression that she was feeling the difference between my open and closed presence. When I opened my presence to her I felt the connection and the beginning of affection and relationship; I felt that I could trust her and that it was safe to be vulnerable with her. These positive feelings persisted and developed when she opened her presence to me. But something strange and unpleasant happened between us when I closed my presence to her and deepened when she closed hers to me. She began to look different to me; not the attractive person she was when we opened our presences to each other; but someone plainer – someone who might wish to harm me in some way.

I was shocked as I felt my confidence in our new relationship drain away and in its place, I began to plan how to defend myself against the attack I imagined would be forthcoming from Rose. After the exercise it took me a little while to regain my equilibrium. I've thought about what happened a lot since then and I can only conclude that in the absence of receiving Rose's presence, I began to project my uncertainties and defences into the 'blank' space. I wonder if this happens in life generally?

There were a number of common statements or questions raised by the group after this exercise:

- *Closed presence is 'cold' – I feel a real temperature change and I breathe more shallowly.*
- *It feels quite difficult to move between the open and closed states – the energy is so different.*
- *In the closed-presence position there is the potential for disdain (and worse), both for the non-giver and the perceiver.*
- *Closed presence doesn't feel neutral – it feels negative; painful, hurtful, dangerous and ugly.*

(Rose commented particularly on this last point:

I was pretty horrified by what I have experienced while being closed to my partner. Here she was, this beautiful vibrant person and yet I had seen an ugliness which had

persisted throughout the time I was closed to her. She suggested that her features had somehow become a caricature. That was exactly it. It was also a caricature of the cruelest sort – Hogarth or Scarff. I had been, and still am, quite shaken.)

- *There is a flow of warmth from the heart area when open-presence is given and received*

This last statement from co-researchers has been mentioned so often by different individuals throughout my research that it must have some significance. In order to make sense of this, I have borrowed from the esoteric spiritual system of the chakras. The chakras, which are symbolic energy ‘wheels’ or centres serve as a bridge between the physical body (made up of flesh and bone) and the subtle body (made of energy). The chakras evolve naturally as part of the development of the whole person and can be open or closed depending on the amount of energy available.

The heart chakra (known as the gateway of the winds) is rooted between the fourth and fifth thoracic vertebrae and is concerned not only with personal love, but its higher form, compassion, which is universal and unconditional love. The action or outpouring of this chakra is described as a continuous flow of living energy through the heart chakra towards others, similar to the flow of warmth described by my co-researchers at the Bath Conference.

Dr Paul Tosey of Surrey University said in conversation with me:

I believe presence is about being open from the heart. Initially I was open from the heart almost indiscriminately and this led to some wonderful experiences and some painful ones. I have realised that when I open my heart I am open to extremes of benefit and vulnerability.

(This insight certainly seems to underline the experiences of the co-researchers as they attempted to open and close their presences to each other).

- *It is so uncomfortable to experience closed presence that we try to ‘seduce’ people into opening their presence to us.*

(I am reminded of watching young children attempting to persuade their adults to be more fully there for them by going through a series of beguiling manoeuvres, including direct eye contact and physical attention seeking, and how distressed the children become when their attempts to be in their adults’ open presence fail.)

- *When experiencing closed-presence, trust was a major problem.*

(This led some group members into conflict situations that couldn’t easily be resolved within the timescales of the practicum.)

April Taylor and Edmund Brookes worked together in the open presence / closed presence exercise. The exercise was difficult and thought provoking for both of them and they wrote to me afterwards, giving me permission to reprint their thoughts and feelings. First April wrote:

My partner in your presence exercise was a man I had never seen before, who joined the group only after the coffee break, so had not been 'present' during the group's formation and development of thought and feeling. I had no choice but to work with him as he had seated himself beside me and everyone else had paired off. Wondering how best to cope with this unsolicited situation; having at first gleaned that it made no difference to him which of us 'went' first, I asked to be the first to make the request. I told him that I would find it easier to start with being closed. He complied and I went through the first round simply by avoiding eye contact. Over the next two rounds I stepped up the avoidance by elaborately looking all round the room and eventually by getting up and walking about. When being open to him I merely maintained a steady eye contact, smiling and relaxing a little.

When it came to his turn he maintained eye contact throughout and I felt little, if any difference, between the two requested attitudes. I found it very difficult to maintain interest in the exercise. When we discussed our findings afterwards, he claimed to have tried to fool me by pretending to be open while remaining closed throughout.

Although I felt increasingly annoyed with him for this ploy, in retrospect there may have been less difference between our performances than his intention and mine might suggest.

I have now therefore concluded that my personal readiness for eye contact, and for the degree of presence that goes with it, is wholly dependent on my being able to approach it from my head – from which it is possible for me to stay in control. Only rarely do I feel able to be present in my heart while maintaining eye contact – and never with a strange man. I could, I believe, have gradually relaxed into it with you or Rose.

All this says so much about the relevance of levels of trust/distrust that I readily endorse your emphasis on heart as the place of meeting, and find myself wondering whether mixed messages may come from those who are, unconsciously, most comfortable in the gut and may misinterpret your heart expressed presence as sensual/sexual. At the very least there is surely a cultural element of expectation/assumption about the risks and consequences of self-exposure.

Edmund offered his reflections:

When I asked my female partner to close her presence to me she got up and strode away. She paced around the room looking disdainfully away. She made no attempt to conceal her actions. I sat looking at her. I felt myself to be detached from her and the exercise. The distance between us enabled me to focus on her as she moved around the room. I looked on quite dispassionately. The gestures and manner were almost theatrical. It was like watching a play which had no meaning for me.

I could stand outside myself and watch the action without any real engagement. When my partner returned I asked her to be open to me. The close proximity was much more unsettling. Her presence intruded upon mine. I saw her face, her lines, her skin, her moles, her blemishes. Her openness was very contradictory and disconcerted me. When she asked me to be open to her I found it a strain. After a while of gazing awkwardly, I pretended to be open, when in fact I was closed.

When I discussed the exercise with her, I mentioned my pretence at openness.

She remarked on the ambivalence and uncertainty I showed. Suddenly she became abusive and swore at me for the deception.

These last pen-portraits were very thought-provoking for me, particularly the wider social implications of the trust/conflict issue around closed presence. Perhaps there is something here that could shed some light on why some people, seemingly unprovoked, attack or are attacked by others, or why some nations/tribes/groups are persistently unable to get on with each other.

I am left with a question about how presence works cross-culturally and also reminded of the responsibility of the facilitator to set safe boundaries when setting up such exercises in groups. In retrospect, I don't think that I did this well enough for April and Edmund. As a consequence there was little time left at the end of the exercise for conflict resolution.

My co-researchers, who were very struck with the possibility of projecting into the gap left by a closed presence, also discussed the sexual element experienced in an open and positive presence. I have conjectured that some individuals, impoverished in relationship terms, might well mistake the sexual intent behind free attention given to them by someone with an open and generous presence. Could this be a new factor behind the statements of those charged with sexual coercion who plead, 'but I really thought s/he wanted me to'. This needs more thought, but I am certain that there are implications here for change agents too, particularly those working with vulnerable individuals in 1-1 work, where to hold the sexual boundaries is part of good practice. A participant illustrated this point:

I took the asking role. 'Be open to me.' Again there was the warm feeling that she was receptive to me and to whatever I sent her. I didn't attempt to convey anything in particular. I idly wondered if any of her clients fall in love with her. I wasn't aware that I was giving any facial signals but felt from her face that she was feeling the same sorts of things that I was.

That there is a sexual or sensual element to a full and positive presence seems to be the conclusion of the majority of my co-researchers, both at the Bath conference, and in other places. I have always included it in my model (See Figure 1) since my earliest interest in the subject.

During my research I had a conversation with Jenny Hitchcock, who is the landlady of a country pub and restaurant. She was clear that presence can not only be turned on and off at will, but that it is a useful tool in making her customers feel cared for:

I use my presence to let people know that I am a caring person and this tends to encourage them to take me into their confidence and to return. It makes them feel special and I suppose it does have a sexual element to it. It can be quite dangerous (in a

business sense) to withhold this presence, perhaps because you are busy. People come to expect it and can be very put off if they don't get it. When my presence is open to people my body relaxes and softens as if something is flowing – a bit like opening your heart in a loving way. It's rather like turning on a tap into something genuine inside you that enables people to see bits of you they wouldn't normally see. That way you give a little more than they would expect and this usually results in them opening to you in return.

I suppose all this can be used manipulatively? I do sense when I'm not going to get a response, or when there's something about the person which does not appeal to me or repels me. I trust my intuition or gut reaction in what I sense about a person. People talk a lot to a person behind the bar; traditionally that's what pubs are about. I sometimes see myself in a kind of therapist role!

Although Jenny's work as a landlady appeared on the surface to be quite different from those attending the practicum session at the Bath Conference (most attendees worked with the management of change in higher education, both in this country and abroad), she agreed with their findings that presence could indeed be turned on and off. She also seemed to be saying that there were consequences to turning it off.

The co-researchers at the practicum found that trust and conflict situations arose as a consequence of turning off presence to another person. They also found that there was some confusion over apparent sexual signals given as part of a wide open presence.

As part of my initial talk to the practicum I offered my model (see Figure 1) for comment. My co-researchers did not disagree with the content of the model but had some difficulty with the hierarchical arrangement of it. They felt that I was suggesting a particular order to the attainment/growth/development of the skills/qualities/philosophies in the model that was in the wrong order for them.

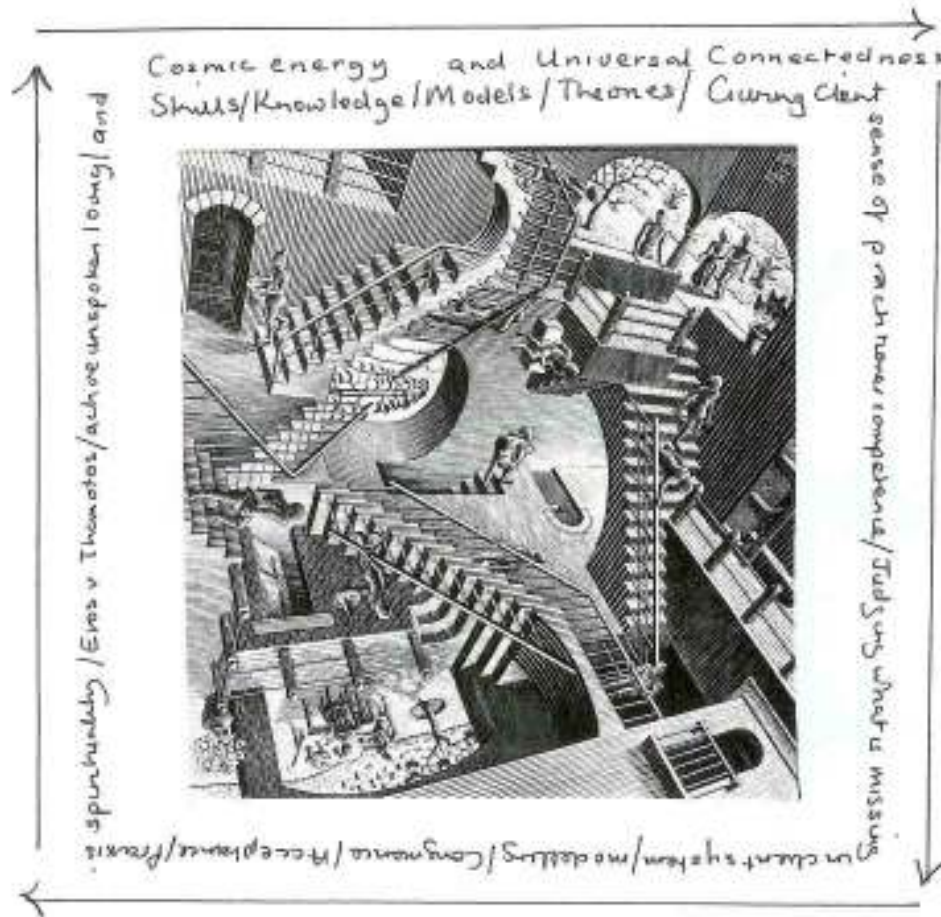


Figure 4 Presence development in the style of M. C. Escher

It was evident during this discussion that each individual had different ideas about the ideal ‘shape’ for the model. I suggested that a continuum such as the Escher Labyrinth (1990), might be more suitable and the group felt this could work well. (See Figure 4.) The Labyrinth seems well-shaped to me to support a diagram of ‘presence-development’ because it suggests direction without hierarchy; thus providing guidance on the components of presence whilst suggesting choice about which ones should be developed by practitioners first.

Where am I now with the research as a result of the work in this chapter?

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced as a result of the work done on this chapter:

- It seems possible to open and close presence by an act of will.
- It seems possible to create exercises that change agents can undertake to investigate and develop presence.
- Such exercises need to be skillfully facilitated to ensure the safety of participants.

Heron (1989) suggests a technique that I could possibly have used to help Edmund and April to a better understanding of each other:

You umpire an exchange of views. When the tension rises, have the pair reverse roles so that they represent fully their opponent's point of view. Then switch back to themselves. Repeat until the debate moves towards rationality and resolution.

- When people encounter closed presence in others, there is the potential for misunderstanding or even conflict.
- There appears to be a sexual or sensual element to the connection experienced through a fully open presence that has the potential to mislead in certain cases.

Starhawk (1979) refers to this connection:

In the ethics of immanence, sexuality is sacred not just as the means of procreation, but as a power that infuses life with vitality and pleasure as the numinous means of deep connection with others.

However part of the change agent's function could be seen as protecting vulnerable individuals or groups that they work with from 'sexual misadventure' during the work. I wrote in an essay on group sexuality in 1993:

At these times (when involved in transpersonal work where members' presences are fully open to each other), the group forgets to hide its sexuality behind a social veneer. Now the facilitator's hands must be light on the reins of the group, but he must be watchful for any signs of abuse, for the group is at its most open and therefore its most vulnerable.

- A significant number of co-researchers notice presence as a warm flow of energy from the heart area.

I became aware at about the time of the completion of Chapter 3, that my confidence that I was working well, and my energy to continue, took a sudden dip. I suddenly began to feel quite lonely with my research. This was strange in view of the numbers of interested co-researchers I had working with me. I realised upon reflection that whilst others were interested in the content and outcome of the research, I was almost the only one interested in the validity of the process.

I booked a supervision session with Dr. Paul Barber, Director of the Human Potential Research Group at Surrey University and my personal tutor for this dissertation. During our discussion I disclosed to him that I was finding the session difficult. I felt unexpectedly nervous and defensive around my work and how it was progressing. It was almost as if the research was my baby, and I had become an over-protective parent!

I realised that I was experiencing an isolating sense of ownership of my work as a result of the total immersion in the topic demanded by the heuristic process. I needed the fresh air of devil's advocacy to rush through my research. Paul spotted this and supplied what was missing. Such questions as 'How do you know this is research?' resharpener my senses and intellect for my next research cycle.

As my personal energy rose I began to notice how many of the questionnaire respondents and other co-researchers at Bath, who were able to articulate their thoughts on presence clearly, mentioned the word 'energy' in their definitions and conversations. My definition of presence had begun to shift or expand to include 'a discernible energy, quite apart from, or in addition to, a person's physical body or characteristics, over which the person can develop/exercise control'.

As this was a subject that had been raised in connection with my own practice, the time seemed right to investigate the meaning of energy as presence both from my own and my co-researchers' points of view. I booked a series of conversations with people who had previously indicated an interest in this area of my research and gathered together feedback I had received from my own clients about my presence.

CHAPTER 4

Presence as Energy

As I start writing Chapter 4, I notice my enthusiasm to explore the link between energy and presence. I think this is because my personal belief is that presence is energy. This view is summed up by Barbara Brennan (1993), an American teacher in the field of human energy and healing.

I call the energy that surrounds and interpenetrates everything the universal energy field. I call the life energy associated with human beings the human energy field. It is more commonly known as the human aura.

Another view from a transpersonal psychology standpoint is offered by Wilbur (1977):

This vital energy is therefore of the timeless moment, of Eternity, and thus of Brahman, Mind, Tao. It is Reality itself.

I first became conscious that my presence must be more than what I say or do and how I appear as a result of a number of comments made to me by my counselling clients. I took my questions to my case discussion group and entered the following in my journal afterwards:

Sometimes my clients report leaving the session on a 'high' but return saying they weren't able to maintain the good feelings and sometimes they feel let down by this. I'm not sure what this means. Another client has described a feeling of intense intimacy that he missed when he left the session.

Do other counsellors notice this happening? What is it about the way I am that could cause such things to happen? My clients seem to agree that it's nothing to do with what's said and I checked with the 'intimacy' client to find out whether he felt the quality of the intimacy was sexual. He said that 'sexual' didn't describe it adequately, although it certainly wasn't sexless.

My peers offered feedback:

When I work with you I get a great sense of energy – positive energy – from you and I take it away with me. Sometimes I feel I take too much.

I experience in our one-to-one sessions a feeling I describe as metabolic arousal; my heart beats fast. I am certainly conscious of this continuing to happen after I've left you.

I wonder if clients get a 'fix' from you – something about energy – and then use it up and experience a 'down'. Perhaps you go too fast?

My supervisor added:

I want to offer the analogy of a Chinese meal. I have seen people literally fill themselves up with what you offer them – gobble it up – and then perhaps they grow empty and need some more. I believe it's right for you to question yourself, but radical changes in your presenting style don't seem to me to be desirable or necessary. Perhaps you could try working in a bigger room. Your presence is very powerful and more space might give the client more choice.

In fact the simple change to a bigger consulting room did seem helpful to the clients concerned, but I felt I needed to consider the matter further. After a conversation with Greg Knight-Benjafield, a member of my MSc group at Surrey University, he wrote to me as follows:

Presence as I see it is an ability to be fully here in this moment, aware of what is going on inside you and what is going on outside you; aware of what is you and what is not you. You demonstrate this, both in the group and outside of it. I can give examples if needed.

But presence is more than that. To me a person who has presence and is present also radiates a certain quality of energy. This energy can be diffuse or very dense. It can be cloaked or revealed strongly – both are done awarely – and to my mind this presence seems to come as a result of time spent in meditation, in reflection, in contact with the earth and living things. It also seems to come with the maturity of living and growing over time and as a result of looking into the shadows that are us.

You demonstrate this kind of presence. You mentioned a concern about whether the energy in your presence might be too strong. The effect that your energy has on me is to leave me with questions about what I want for myself, about how I can go forward and where I can't yet see. Mostly I feel this to be a gentle process. Sometimes it puts me in touch with thoughts and feelings I have put aside or looked over, which I find challenging – but welcome.

In my own therapy I have been learning how to regulate the amount of energy in my presence as seems appropriate in different life and client situations. This involves a simple visualisation exercise where I centre myself in my 'quiet space' (an area just beneath my heart), and intentionally decide what sort of energy is required by the situation confronting me. This act of will appears to be all that is required to appropriately 'tune' the energy in my presence to the client needs. Another member of my MSc group, Steve Dilworth wrote:

Your presence now seems calm and centred and I get a strong sense of you as a spiritual and sexual being. A drawback can be that I am sometimes in awe of your all round power. I don't see this as power over me – just power that is apparent to me.

I was now getting a clearer picture about the issues of presence within my own practice and turned my attention outward to my co-researchers and their experiences. In September 1994 I had a conversation with Petruska Clarkson the Gestaltist, where we discussed the development of presence. She told me that:

I don't necessarily feel it important to develop more presence, but rather to be able to

have choices about the amount or type of presence to transmit in different situations. I regulate my own presence – down when I'm talking to you, up in a large group, but down when a group is excited and up when the group is lazy. I think the ability to be able to do this is the part of presence which might most usefully be developed.

This suggestion certainly tallies with my own experience, where to be 'appropriate' in the regulation of my presence appears to be beneficial to my clients. However, Petruska Clarkson does not advocate the suppression of presence generally in her daily life. She added:

In my early life and career, I attempted to suppress my presence believing that I would overly affect other people. Now I take a humbler view that I will not over-influence and have grown into my full presence – which I enjoy.

(Petruska did not particularly like the word 'presence' which meant nothing to her. Instead she uses the ancient Greek word Physis to represent life force or life energy as it manifests itself in nature, healing and in all dimensions of creativity).

Another person with whom I have often discussed the subject of presence is Lynne Sedgemore, Head of the Business School at Croydon College. She invited me to the College in September 1994 to talk about the matter further. Shortly after our conversation, which was a significant one for us both for different reasons, (see 'where am I now' at the end of this chapter), she wrote the following letter to me and gave me permission to reprint the letter in this document:

Dear Jan,

Following our conversation I wish to feedback to you some of the feelings, responses and thoughts I have had since the discussion on Friday.

During the interview, the key experience for me was the spontaneous recall into my being and into the room of spiritual teachers whose presences have most influenced me, i.e. Mother Meera, Bede Griffiths and Thick na Than. The very recall of their presences (which I remember as calm, loving, peaceful, centred, full of light and connected) gave me a sense of being as I spoke. My energy lifted and I felt/became the presence/energy I was describing. You noticed and commented on my aura and the energy you could feel in me. I can still feel the effect of that moment.

Since the interview, my view of others has changed – particularly my view of my intimate partner with whom I feel a sharp contrast in presence from the presences experienced in the interview. I realise I am feeling manipulated and controlled by him and want no part of that in my life. My being is calling out for nourishment from other presences.

The interview experience has also helped me to internalise my own affinity with spiritual presences and realities; if I am so aligned with such presences and energies – what am I doing living the life I do?

For me the presence of someone is determined by their states of being. I frequently project that others are beyond where they are. Instead of projecting, it is time I accepted myself and the consequences of the kind of life I currently live – and to make the appropriate changes to love and support myself.

There are some other things I remember about the interview:

- *presence for me is determined by the state of being of the person*
- *the key to effective presence is the skill/ability to be able to choose how to use it in the service of others. One has to be at a late stage of personal development to be able to choose.*
- *my symbol is a lighthouse – with light rays going out horizontally*
- *I experience someone's presence with all of me – through my skin – hard to explain the components. It is energy – the waves from another that signal to me their presence.*
- *The interview/dialogue has had a much more profound effect on me than I anticipated and was much stronger than the questionnaire.*

The above letter from Lynne caused me to give much thought to the responsibility of a researcher when working with live material. When does research become counselling (and should it?), or should the aim of research be to significantly touch or alter peoples' lives – and if yes – how profoundly? I feel nervous about the boundaries of my researcher role. If I bring all of myself to the work as demanded by the heuristic process, how possible will it be to simply collect information, give meaning and be gone? I know from my own therapy that my own presence/energy is highly catalytic. Does this mean that as a result of my looking or being with a situation, I will change it? The evidence begins to suggest that this is the case.

Reflecting back on the time I spent with Lynne at Croydon College, I realised how hard I had to work; maintaining maximum energy in the presence I extended towards her to enable and support, whilst holding the boundaries of the work as she appeared to channel presences other than her own into the room. I do not feel that simply observing and questioning would have had the same outcome. Therefore I must conclude that as researcher, I am having an effect on the situations I am researching into and question the validity of that.

The conversation with Lynne was very different to one I had in October 1994 with Louisa Page. Whereas the first felt like an in depth exploration between two equally interested co-researchers, the second was more of a tentative first step by a young adult to give meaning to her growing intuitive feelings about presence. Louisa is my youngest co-researcher. She is interested in motivation and enabling people to reach their potential. She is beginning to enjoy thinking conceptually and using models. Presence is not something she had studied or discussed before

in great detail but she offered her first thoughts to me in the following conversation:

I think presence is picked up as a gut reaction I have about somebody – the way they come across to me. It's something they can't lie about. It's something that is underneath all the acts and pretences that a person puts on. I pick up this information by listening and watching plus a gut reaction that I feel. I've sometimes taken an instant dislike to certain people; I feel that I can't trust them. I step back a bit – not because of what I see and hear about them, but what I feel inside. I don't know how I do this, but I know I always have. Nowadays though I am really listening to that gut reaction. In the past I haven't always listened and often this has been to my cost, so now I listen to myself more.

I asked Louisa what she thought had made her switch from simply reacting to a gut feeling to listening to herself in some new way:

When I moved away from home and lived in a bedsit environment I was initially extremely naive and trusted everybody. Then I realised that this wasn't sensible and started to listen to what my inner voice was saying. If I get a sense of 'be careful' coming when I am with another person I hold back with being completely open and friendly. I don't know if the other person notices this – they may notice me switch off. It's so hard to describe in words what I mean, but the switched offness seems like an outline of my body shape with about four fifths open and this last fifth which is the closed part. I use what my gut says to decide how many sections-worth I will open to someone else. The switched-off part is angry-coloured; not red because that feels too passionate; not black because that just represents 'stop' to me – and that's not really it. It's a good active purple sort of closedness.

I asked Louisa how she felt people experienced her presence.

People I am close to say they find me hard to understand – something about my body language, eye-contact and the amount of importance I give to people. I give them importance by the particular way I listen to them. I don't take any notice of what's going on around us; I just really attend to them and give them time. At work I do this for people because I'm paid to, but that's not really all of it by any means. I really get satisfaction from relationships like that. When I give people this sort of attention, they behave differently. First of all they seem surprised and then they relax and talk to me. When I don't attend in this way, I just give them their goods, take their money and they go. It's so impersonal a transaction nothing of myself goes into it. I see presence just like that – as something of myself apart from what I say and do.

I think I'm quite good at picking up the presence of others too. I went to an old people's home to make a delivery to an old lady who had a stroke. I didn't know until afterwards that she had been a magistrate, but just walking into her room I felt an incredible sense of her intelligence. Her presence was so interesting I wanted to sit and talk and find out about her. There was something about her that made me sense she had lived an interesting life; that I could learn from her and that realisation happened in a split second. I felt this just by walking into her room. I really trust that feeling. The qualities I felt were intelligence, strength, wisdom and energy; strange from such a very sick old lady.

If I wanted to develop my presence I would do it by getting to know more about

myself, by trying to break out of the cycles I've been in since childhood – it's all interconnected. Once I have been able to look at my personal difficulties and sort them out I shall be able to present more of the person I am – pure me.

This conversation had a rawness and freshness about it. Louisa was searching for practical solutions and ideas to make her life easier and more productive. She dropped her thoughts into my lap and ran away to do something else. Re-listening to her taped conversation I believe I can detect the seeds of other things – the beginnings of the use of symbol and metaphor, a growing sense of the intuitive and something of the spiritual in her description of the wisdom, energy and intelligence in the presence of a very sick old lady. The energy in Louisa's presence seemed darting and quick, silver, green and lemon smelling; young but with hidden hurts as yet undealt with not far under the surface.

Brennen (1993) portrays presence as an expression of the core of an individual. She writes:

Each day we express our core to a certain degree. Energies that come uninhibited directly from the core create great human works and great human lives.

Louisa seemed to be able to detect energy directly from the core of the old lady that was not inhibited by her frail and sick condition.

Where am I now with the research after completing this chapter?

I spent the weekend previous to writing up this chapter in the Black Mountains climbing with a party of new friends in a remote area in bad weather. Our party was fairly well spread out up and down the lonely Welsh slopes. Because of fog and driving rain it was difficult to see as I climbed how much further there was to go. I was struck with the similarity between my situation there and my research in this respect. However, the solitude of my position on the mountainside, usually towards the back of the party, gave me time to consider what was important for the climb – (and possibly for the research too) – not getting lost in the fog, steadily making my way up and down hill, trusting that my energy would last and that I wouldn't become caught up in the competitive and somewhat ego driven situation that existed amongst the party to be first, fittest etc.

As far as the research is concerned, I realised that there were many parallels; lack of focus now would certainly result in my getting lost in the mountain of information supplied by my co-researchers; hoping I had enough energy to complete the research, earn a living, move house, get fit for a trek in Nepal next year and rehearsing for a Christmas pantomime was certainly a major concern. As far as competitiveness goes, initially I would admit to no trace of it around my dissertation. But I was fooling myself, for my ego had begun to accompany me in my research. This became evident to me when Petruska Clarkson agreed to give me time to discuss my work on presence with her. I wrote to her after my visit:

After leaving you I sat on the wooden seat by the church not far from your house to reflect on our conversation. I was very upset to find that the tape we had made had not recorded. I noticed that much of my reaction came from my ego; about the loss of a recording from someone well-known and respected. This surprised me and was useful because I don't believe research is over-helped by operating out of too much ego.

Once I had 'settled down' I sat in the sunshine, closed my eyes and allowed bits of our discussion to surface as they would. I jotted these down and the attached list are the 'surfacings'. I'd like to know if you feel they represent your views accurately.

I am wondering whether the technical hitch is a message to forget the detail, relax and allow the essence or core of my subject to make itself known to me.

This was not the only technical hitch to trip me up. Another occurred after I had meticulously checked my recording equipment during my session with Lynne Sedgemore. The conversation as she called the presences of her spiritual teachers to join us in the room did not register on the tape – instead the recording was of high static crackling with occasional words audible.

I was particularly distressed to find that the recording Lynne made directly afterwards with the same equipment had worked perfectly. Initially I was devastated at what I felt was loss of important evidence, but on reflection realised that the recording of such highly charged and 'delicate' live material felt inappropriate to the point of being 'coarse'. Lynne's retrospective letter to me

afterwards, with its permission to reprint, honoured the nature of the work and represented it in a more appropriate way.

The work with Lynne felt highly intimate and helped me to see my researcher role in a new way. These lines by Woolf (1931) reminded me of the work we did and re-reminded me of the insight I had in Chapter 1 around how I tend to get my intimacy needs met in my work:

But when we sit together, close, we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory.

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced from the work carried out in this chapter:

- It makes a positive difference to clients when the practitioner offers the appropriate amount of energy in their presence to match the client situation.
- It seems possible to learn to regulate the amount of energy in presence to match a given client/life situation.
- Regulation of presence appears to be effected by an intentional act of will. Visualisation or meditation has been used helpfully to achieve this intentionally.
- If the presence of the researcher is catalytic, how can she remain a neutral observer and gatherer of information (and should she?)?
- When the intervention of the researcher begins to affect the research outcome (as it did in the interview with Lynne Sedgemore), how can the integrity of the work be protected?

One of the main questions I am left with after this chapter is, what if anything is different about the co-researchers who are clear that presence is about energy and the human life force, and those co-researchers who don't or can't make that connection at all? I am also now more watchful of my own processes around this issue. How am I different as a researcher with co-researchers whose views correspond to my personal view – and how will this affect the research?

CHAPTER 5

Presence and Development

As a result of my work on the last chapter, I began to look back over the transcripts of conversations and the questionnaire responses sent to me, to try to discover some pattern in the way different change agents perceive presence and what they feel they need to develop as a result of this.

I was surprised to see that there seems to be some preliminary correlation between how presence is perceived (and as a result of that, what should be developed) and the guiding approach; model or theory used by the change agent.

Mulligan (1993) offers us some sound general advice; something of a shopping list for presence development:

Presence can be enhanced by a variety of methods, for example, disidentification with personalised and narrow perspectives, cultivation of internal and external awareness by transcending perceptive barriers. Developing personal functional capacities, increased self-knowledge, charismatic training and grounding in, and preparation of your subject matter. Other possibilities include development of self concept, self-esteem, self presentational capacities, or evocation of the higher 'Self'.

Discussions with my co-researchers, however, suggest that practitioners using the therapeutic approaches in list A below (which tend to deal with the mind and intellect) mostly (but not always) believe that the development and manifestation of presence is chiefly concerned with acquiring knowledge of skills, models and theories, giving the client a sense of practitioner competence by this means and attention to body language, eye contact etc.

List A

- Behavioural therapies
- Cognitive therapy
- Family and systems therapy
- Jungian analysis (London School)
- Kleinian analysis
- Standard management development and training
- Personal Construct therapy
- Problem Solving (Egan, Total Quality Management etc.)
- Psychoanalysis (Classical School)
- Rational Emotive therapy

Co-researchers using the therapeutic approaches in list B below (which tend to deal with the mind and body) suggest that although the skills mentioned above are important, the ability to judge what is missing in the client system and modelling it, ability to be congruent, show acceptance and attention to self-awareness are the part of presence most necessary to be developed.

List B

- Adlerian therapy
- Bioenergetics
- Co-counselling
- Encounter
- Gestalt therapy
- Person-centred therapy
- Psychoanalysis (Object Relations School)
- Psychodrama
- Transactional Analysis

Co-researchers using the therapeutic approaches in list C below (which tend to deal with the mind, body and spirit) acknowledge the necessity of the skills and attitudes listed above, but find more important still spirituality, sexuality, Eros (creation) versus Thanatos (release), intensely active but unspoken loving, cosmic energy and universal connectedness.

List C

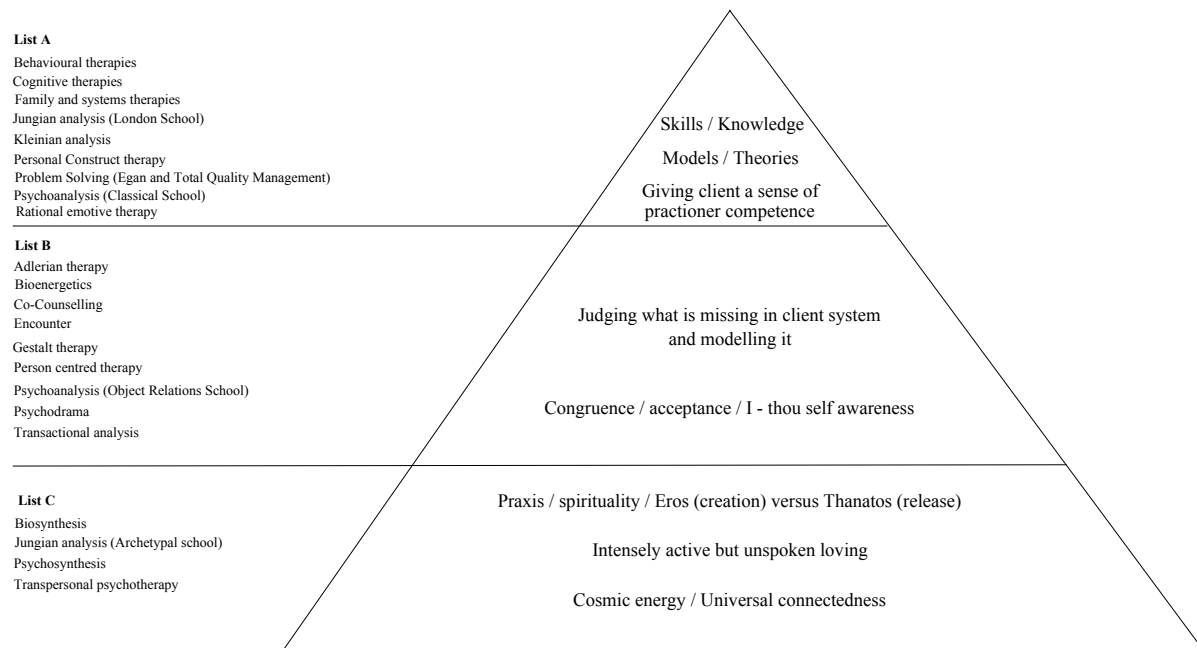
- Biosynthesis
- Jungian analysis (Archetypal school)
- Psychosynthesis
- Transpersonal psychotherapy

The above research postulation is flawed by the fact that not all therapeutic and developmental approaches are represented in my co-researchers' practices and not all approaches are mutually exclusive of each other. However, my work seems to suggest sufficient correlation to warrant further study. This is illustrated by the composite model in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Presence development needs reported by co-researchers

Co-researcher's therapeutic approaches

Presence development needs



John Hunter is a management consultant who uses Egan's 3-stage change model (list A), in his organisational work, particularly when working towards BS5750 using Total Quality Management tools and techniques. His view of the development of presence is that it needs to be predominantly skills based:

When I am with a client, the sense he needs to get from my presence is that I am able to help – that I am competent. I need to be able to talk fluently about the models and change theories I use and how they will help the client to process information. Obviously, I try to show him that I am listening, that I empathise with his position and that I can keep confidentiality. The part of my presence that I wish to develop next is around body language and questioning techniques. Apart from that I expect my presence to grow and develop without any real attention from me.

John's stated presence-development needs are very much in line with those illustrated at the top of my hierarchy of presence (Figure 1). Egan (1986) describes the qualities of presence he thinks are necessary for those change agents working with problem solving approaches:

'What is most important is the quality of your presence to your clients. You are present through what you say and what you do. If you care about your clients and feel deeply committed to their welfare, it is unfair to yourself to let your nonverbal behaviour convey a contradictory message. On the other hand if you feel indifferent to them and your non-verbal behaviour suggests commitment, you are not being genuine. Effective helpers stay in touch with how they are present to clients, without becoming

preoccupied with it.'

Another co-researcher Graham Butler, who has recently completed the Facilitator Styles Course at Surrey University and used the Transactional Analysis matrix (list B) in his counselling and consultancy work, spoke about his own presence and the development of it:

Presence is how I am, here and now. TA (Transactional Analysis) looks at the true person and the adapted person. When I want to develop my presence I look at the nurturing parent, the critical controlling parent, the adapted and free child, then do an analysis of where I think I spend most of my time. After I have done the analysis I decide where I want to be.

Clients need to know they can touch us; they sense when we are adapted; not there in that trueness. Unconditional positive regard for a client means that I allow him to be there as he is. I might not like him, but I realise he is a human being. I try to recreate for the client what he might not have in his family of origin: the right to speak, to know and to exist. As I allow the other person to exist in my presence they move down into the more unacceptable bits of themselves and discover they can move bits around.

My 'be perfect driver' pushes me very nicely into the TA matrix, which is very boxed up and neat. It's very different from something like working in the here and now – which isn't neat at all. Here and now presence is about tuning in to what the client is thinking and feeling. It requires a kind of spiritual presence and this sounds a bit 'high falutin' – you can't define a presence like that can you?

Presence is an adapted social thing. I don't know what my presence was like at birth, but I am beginning to realise through the life journey I have taken that I can undo or change my presence. I feel I am trying to discover the real presence 'underneath'. I envisage myself as the sea. On the sea bed plants are growing and someone cuts them loose then they float to the surface. The water is full of life. I'd like to think I'm developing in the direction of thinking about my presence as my life force, but when I move in the direction of these spiritual things, I find I can't hold them.

Claire Breeze, an Adlerian counsellor and management consultant (list B) felt that:

The less ego centred my intentions are, the more my presence expands in a quiet/light way, but when I'm anxious my presence is heavy and unchannelled. I'm not quite sure about developing presence but I do spend time before I begin work invoking a clear intention and appropriate way to behave around people. I concentrate on breathing and spirit.

Brennen (1993) appears to agree with Claire's feelings about the importance of intention:

The major difference between the higher self, the lower self and the mask self is found in the foundation of underlying intent upon which each is based, and in the quality of energy present in any interaction that results from the underlying intent.

Claire's views about what is needed to develop presence are quite similar to those

illustrated in the middle section of my hierarchy of presence (See Figure 1). She explains:

For the development of presence in an individual to take place effectively they need to receive feedback, develop self-awareness, learn to have experiences that they can critically reflect on and review. They also need to experience modelling of presence by others.

John Fairfax is a Psychosynthesis therapist (list C). He describes one of the ways in which he likes to work:

My presence needs to be very allowing. The client needs to know he has as much time as he needs to explore his imaginal world through myth, metaphor and visualisation. I have no idea what will come up for him during the session, but I must be ready to receive and help him hold what comes. In order to prepare my presence for this work I tend to relax and go through a visualisation where I picture myself held in beams of light which emanate from my aura and secure me to greater sources of power in the universe. That way more powerful energies than mine take part in the work.

Hardy and Whitmore (1988) talk of the development of the ‘person’ of the psychosynthesis therapist:

The therapist’s presence and his relationship with the client is seen in psychosynthesis to be the single most important factor in facilitating growth. In psychosynthesis the therapist is often called guide. This assumes that each individual has within a unique hidden blueprint of his or her personal and spiritual development. The guide must be familiar with and learn to skilfully travel the terrain of his own path of development. It is only when the guide is available as a whole person that he will be able to facilitate the whole person of the client.

Clark (1977) draws our attention to the change in developmental emphasis that occurs as a result of working with a transpersonal approach such as psychosynthesis:

The change in attitude which occurs when a therapist moves toward a transpersonal orientation has been described as a shift from working on yourself to working with yourself.

Choosing therapeutic approaches

I examined with my co-researchers, the question of whether change agents choose to work with certain approaches/theories and subsequently develop a certain type of presence as a result of this choice, or whether the possession of a certain type of presence directs the change agent towards appropriate approaches.

The co-researchers who did not initially understand, or who could not immediately respond to this question tended to be mainly those working with the

approaches in list A. Other people seemed to feel that it was a chicken and egg situation.

Joanna Knight offered:

This reflects the nature/nurture debate! I guess probably both things are true but whether there's a preferential way of doing things . . . who knows?

My own view, reflecting my experience, is that when I trained originally as a counsellor using psychodynamic approaches, my presence was developed by mastering certain skills: questioning techniques, empathy, problem solving etc., but that now my move towards transpersonal counselling has been directed by what I bring to the work in terms of my presence: the channelling of energy, spirituality and a universal connectedness which guides me. Because of the way my presence is, there are some approaches that I am unlikely to use with my clients. I believe that as I developed as a human being through mentoring, spiritual direction, meditation and therapy, my presence has changed, and as a result of this change, I make my choices about which approaches should guide my work.

I was interested to find that change agents using approaches in lists B and C were generally more fluent in expressing their views on presence, both in conversations and on their questionnaires. Those using approaches in list A tended to be more tentative in their answers. They also stated more often than the co-researchers in the other lists that they had not given the subject of presence much previous thought.

Where am I now with the research as a result of completing this chapter?

I have both negative and positive feelings about the work in this chapter; positive because some new ideas (for me) are emerging, and negative because many of these new ideas will not be conclusive within the scope of this document.

However, in terms of a practical outcome to my work and with my counselling and supervision students in mind, I feel I am better placed than previously to understand the different presence-development needs of change agents using a variety of therapeutic approaches. This work will have to be refined and more widely sampled, however, to be conclusive. At present it remains an interesting possibility.

As a researcher I am conscious at this stage of mild (or possibly not so mild) feelings of panic about my work. I think this is because it suddenly seems that the research has a life of its own quite apart from me; it's out of my control and is springing off in other directions without me. I am reminded of my role as a parent where I brought children into the world, fed, nurtured and guided them. Suddenly they grew up, took control of their lives and became autonomous. Can my research have a life without me? And should it?

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced from the work carried out in this chapter:

- Change agents using different therapeutic approaches have quite different presence-development needs
- It seems possible to categorise and be specific about the presence-development needs of change agents using different approaches
- Change agents using the approaches in list A (approaches that tend to deal with the mind and the intellect), had most difficulty in considering questions about presence overall. They also appeared to have the 'simplest' needs in terms of presence development: behavioural skills that can be taught and learnt
- Change agents using the approaches in list B (approaches that tend to deal with the mind and body), and list C (approaches that deal with the mind, body and spirit), had more complex presence-development needs. Such needs tended to be about how the change agent made judgements and viewed his world in the case of list B, plus his deepest values, beliefs about life and philosophies in the case of list C.
- Presence-development needs for change agents in lists B and C may be less easy to teach in taught courses, but are more likely to form part of a

journey of self-development for the individuals concerned.

- Many of the co-researchers could not decide whether a certain type of presence dictated the use of a certain therapeutic approach, or whether practising certain approaches developed a particular kind of presence. However, the exception to this were the six co-researchers who use the mind/body/spirit approaches in list C. These change agents all felt that they were drawn to using such approaches by the very nature of their presences.

My shadow side whispers to me about the findings in this chapter:

‘You could quite easily have manipulated the data to say these things; you are a clever interviewer – you can get people to go down the avenues you want. Perhaps none of this has any validity whatsoever? How can you really know these things?’

I have to whisper back ‘Perhaps.’ These thoughts tend to come when I am working alone, late at night. They could simply be tiredness, and yet . . .

It is time to be curious about how the relevant ‘experts’ in the field would agree or disagree with our findings. I deliberately delayed my literature search until this stage of the work because I didn’t want to be overly influenced by other important views. I felt that the research would then be more likely to have originality, even if there was a greater risk of ‘reinventing the wheel’.

However, I am noticing my reluctance now to start the work of searching through all the books on my desk for relevant references. As I have written elsewhere in this document, I have been struck by how few change agents in the field actually know about or use the literature already written on the subject of presence. I am wondering whether my reluctance and that of change agents generally to read what has been written about presence is caused by the same assumption – that the information tends to be inaccessible and difficult to read.

So, in addition to looking for support or disagreement for our research findings, I shall also be hoping to check out these assumptions as I begin my literature search.

I also notice, somewhat wryly, that although I have been overwhelmed by offers from those who wished to be involved with my research up until now, no-one wants to help me search the literature! A small number of people that I approached for help with specific references have been too busy – I guess searching the texts is not as ‘sexy’ a part of the research as some of the other bits!

CHAPTER 6

Presence – What Does the Literature Say?

I overcame my reluctance to start the literature search (which promised to be a monumental endeavour), by forming clear intentions about how to structure the task. These were:

1. To discover what texts exist on the subject of presence and to arrange these according to the developmental needs stated by my co-researchers in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5).
2. To distribute the texts between the headings of lists A, B and C (see Chapter 5) and simply make linkages and point out opposing arguments where necessary, but otherwise leave the authors' words to give just a flavour of what to expect from their work on presence.
3. To see what these texts are saying about presence and its development
4. To raise awareness in the field (through my co-researchers and interested others) of these texts.
5. To make some preliminary recommendations (in response to co-researchers' requests) about which texts might usefully inform change agents using a variety of guiding approaches.
6. To notice where authors' approaches coincide or differ from my own in respect of the treatment of the subject of presence.
7. To remain true to the heuristic process by noticing what it feels like to do these things.

List A Texts (literature useful for developing the presence of change agents guided by approaches which tend to deal with the mind and intellect).

At a very practical level, Pedler et al. (1986) invite those engaged in organisational change activities to develop a sensitivity to events, a deeper self-knowledge and to refine their listening and empathising skills:

The ideal manager is a helper who provides personal support for staff. Leonard Doyles calls this function 'responsiveness' and notes that if a manager is accessible to staff they will often come just to be listened to.

Egan (1976) suggests that '*Deep interpersonal transactions demand a certain intensity of presence*'. In a later book (1986) he sets exercises based on a self-questioning techniques to enable the change agent to develop this 'intensity':

- *Does the client experience me as effectively present and working with him or her?*
- *Does my non-verbal behaviour reinforce my internal attitudes?*
- *What values are operative in my interactions with clients?*
- *How might I be more effectively present to this person?*

Egan (1986) also strongly advocates active listening and attending as skills necessary if a change agent is to be truly present for his client:

Physical attending is a matter of being present to another; listening is what you do to attend. The face and body are extremely communicative. Even when two people are silent together, the atmosphere can be filled with messages. More than physical presence is desired – you want psychological presence.

Erikson (1964) reminds us of the dangers of inattention to body language:

Hardly has one learned to recognise the familiar face (the original harbor of trust) when (the child) becomes also frightfully aware of the unfamiliar, the strange face, the unresponsive, the averted . . . and here begins that inexplicable tendency on one man's part to turn elsewhere. Perhaps the averted face is too often a sign of the averted heart?

Heider (1985) does not recommend the acquisition of skills to develop presence:

*An experienced traveller does not need a packaged tour to go places safely. The wise leader's ability does not rest on techniques or gimmicks or set exercises.
The leader's personal state of consciousness creates a climate of openness.
Centre and ground give the leader stability, flexibility and endurance.*

Nevis (1991) appears to be offering an opposing view:

The living embodiment of knowledge: the theories, the models, the practices believed to be essential to bring about change in people are manifested, symbolised or implied in the presence of the consultant.

Ram Dass (1981) writes of the ‘listening mind’:

The ability to avoid being entrapped by one another’s mind is one of the great gifts we can offer each other. With the compassionate and spacious awareness and the listening it makes possible, we can offer those we are with a standing invitation to come out from where they are caught, if they are ready and wish to do so.

Several authors talk about the value of silence:

An enabling presence . . . gives abundant free attention to the group, an intense, silent activity of consciousness that encompasses and enhances the autonomy of all present. (Heron 1989).

And in metaphorical mood, Hesh et al. (1978) describe how:

He learned more from the river than Vasudeva could teach him. He learned from it continually. Above all, he learned from it how to listen with a still heart, with a waiting open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgement, without opinions.

Rogers (1962), however, urges caution on the use of silence:

A reason for avoiding silence is that it can facilitate transference. If the therapist has maintained silence, it is easier for the client to project meaning into that silence. The therapist may have been approving, disapproving, contemptuous, bored – the client’s needs make it easy to project in this fashion when there is little evidence to go on.

Kovel (1976) links transference to ‘the way the change agent is’:

Transference wishes are stored up willy nilly whether the therapist cultivates them or not, but the form they assume depends greatly upon what the therapist does and more importantly is.

Freud (1954), from the standpoint of a psychoanalytic approach, observed that her patients began to treat her ‘*in ways approximating earlier relationships, often although not always, as a parent*’. Initially Freud saw this as a drawback, a resistance to the work, but eventually came to see that this transference of earlier feeling onto the therapist was the living acting out of the client’s present problem. Freud believed that the transference should be nurtured, worked on and then dissolved.

Heron (1989), by contrast gives some practical advice on developing ‘enabling presence’:

Behaviourally it involves the gaze, facial expression and position relative to others. It is supportive, alert, expectant and invisibly beckoning, waiting for each person in the group to emerge in ways that are meaningful for that person and their fulfilment . . . it is attuned to the movements of transforming energy within the group.

List B Texts (suggested literature useful for developing the presence of change agents guided by approaches that tend to deal with the mind and body)

Kovel (1976) suggests that the change agent's task is to supply what is missing in the client situation:

As Levi-Strauss observed for primitive healers, the cure need not succeed by objectively working with the truth of the patient's situation, but by supplying a missing piece of a myth, acceptance of which serves to reunite the sufferer with his community.

Mulligan (1993) appears to concur when he discusses Nevis's (1991) view that:

. . . part of the consultant's task is to provide the kind of presence which may be lacking in the client system to enable learning to occur.

Both Heron (1989) and Rogers (1967) advise those in the field to 'go inward' in order to develop an 'enabling presence':

You are centring yourself, finding your own reality, visiting an internal watering place, tapping the inner universe, finding the well spring of your own emerging person. This is the inner ground for enabling presence. (Heron 1989)

And Rogers (1967) appears to feel similarly:

It seems to me that the individual moves towards being, knowing and accepting, the process which he inwardly and actually is.

Heron (1989) continues the theme of 'inward' development of presence:

You actively manifest your presence, your charismatic way of being, as and when appropriate, in and through hierarchical interventions. This is the inward spiritual power of the human person.

On a more sinister, but thought-provoking note, the convicted killer Charles Manson (whose followers claimed to be attracted by his unusual charismatic presence) was quoted by Emmens (1988) as he expressed his ideas on the 'inward' theme:

I am only what lives inside each and every one of you. I am only what you made me. I

am only a reflection of you.

Another charismatic leader not generally known for his good works was Hitler. His statement below reported by Waite (1977), bears some resemblance to the views expressed by Manson above:

I know that everything you are, you are through me and everything I am, I am through you alone.

However, Heron (1989) is clear about the importance of the charismatic quality of the change agent's presence. He believes this can be developed by:

Attuning to psychic and spiritual energies and entering altered states of consciousness and action.

But Gutman (1973) presents what appears to be an argument against the charismatic intervention:

There is a resurgence of mythical thought, and a tendency to boundary loss in worship of charismatic leaders who offer themselves as substitute superegos. It is the present culture of narcissism that makes people likely to accept charismatic intervention.

When the internal autocrat of the superego disappears, it is reborn externally – it becomes the coercive power of the priest, the prince, the sorcerer and the group.

Lindholm (1990) points out a possible link between a charismatic presence and the possibility of 'romantic love':

Romantic love must have the potential for mutuality and so cannot be for a thing or a cause, but only for a person. It is hard to distinguish it from charisma, however, since in the charismatic relation the tie between leader and follower is conceived of and felt as mutual and as elevating for the follower, who identifies with the charismatic and grandiose leader.

Yet more possible mishap caused by an unhealthy charismatic presence is discussed by Kriegman and Solomon (1995):

Therapeutic groups have themselves occasionally escalated into cults when a therapist of charismatic personality decided to expand his power beyond the office and to dominate patient's lives.

Corey and Corey (1992) propose an attention to, and a self-awareness of the change agent's emotional reactions, in order to avoid over-charismatic behaviour:

The ability to be emotionally present with group members is extremely important. You become more emotionally involved by paying close attention to your own reactions. If you have a limited understanding of who you are, you will surely not be able to facilitate this kind of awareness in clients . . . Some leaders are so intent on being in the spotlight that they can't focus on anything outside themselves.

(Corey and Corey (1992) also include a useful section on the presence-development requirements for change agents working to a co-facilitation model.)

A process to avoid such unhealthy interventions as those described above is suggested by Levin (1981) who believes that a psychologically healthy presence results from a process of personal integration:

Health, radically understood, is simply a question of staying with the situated experiential process just as it presents itself and letting the spontaneous play of energies flow freely, not separated by conflict into subject and object, inner and outer, myself and others, nor myself (here) and the situation (there). The wholesome flow of creative interplay of the process is what principally matters.

Maslow (1962) makes a link between what he describes as the ‘self-actualising person’ and an absence of ill-health:

Self-actualisation is defined in various ways, but a solid core of agreement is perceptible. All definitions accept or imply (a) acceptance and expression of the inner core or self, i.e. actualisation of latent capacities and potentialities, (b) they all imply minimal presence of ill health, neurosis, psychosis, loss or diminution of the basic human and personal capacities.

On a different track, Mahrer (1983) takes the listening skills described by the list A texts to a deeper level. He advocates ‘listening with resonance’:

This kind of listening involves a complete sharing of the client’s phenomenal world. The therapist becomes part of the personality of the client and then the therapist will have experiencings which are also occurring in the client.

Finally, Maslow (1954) eloquently describes a deepening of the acceptant attitude (described in List A texts), which most particularly reflects the presence of the ‘self-actualising person’:

One does not complain about water because it is wet nor about rocks because they are hard . . . As the child looks out upon the world with wide, uncritical and innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so does the self-actualising person look upon human nature both in themselves and in others.

List C (Literature useful for developing the presence of change agents guided by approaches which tend to deal with the mind, body and spirit).

Jung (1988) reminds us of the difficulties of the journey that is self-development:

There is no birth of consciousness without pain.

Groff (1979) is less 'grim' but somewhat judgemental about those who decide not to make that journey. He discovered in his experiments, firstly with drugs and more latterly with music and breathing, a wide variety of transpersonal experiences, such as oneness with life and all creation, identification with the entire physical universe, embryonal and fetal experiences, experiences of mythological and fairytale sequences. He appears to be saying that a change agent operating from an approach which does not include the transpersonal is limiting the potential growth of the client:

To the extent that we do not cover the transpersonal including the spiritual in our work with clients, we are cheating them of their birthright; not allowing them to develop into their full humanity.

Rowan (1993) seems to agree and makes the additional point that:

Full humanity through transpersonal development makes it easier for people to develop an ecological consciousness.

Macy (1982) writes on the subject of ecological connectedness:

One of the basic forms of a deep ecological presence is that with maturity, human beings will experience joy when other life forms experience joy and sorrow when other life forms experience sorrow.

Heron (1992) too, values this ecological and connected way of being:

The power of feeling is evident in relationship not only with other persons but also with rocks, trees, animals and the rest of nature . . . When the alienating scream of language is transcended, then through feeling we participate in a world of presences . . . each with its way of being.

James (1901) also spoke about a universal connectedness that can guide work:

He became conscious that this higher part is conterminous and continuous with a more (a custom or convention) of the same quality which is operative in the universe outside him and which he can keep in working touch with.

For James (1901) presence development was about spiritual enlightenment:

The soul's real world is that which it has built of its thoughts, mental states and imaginations. If we will, we can turn our backs upon the lower plain and lift ourselves into the realm of the spiritual and Real and then gain residence. The ego gradually becomes conscious that it is face to face with the Divine Presence.

However, both Anthony et al. (1987) and Rowan (1993) have an interesting view about minimalising the enlightenment process. They write about what they call

the ‘dangers of one-step enlightenment’ which Rowan describes as ‘a snare and a delusion’ for those working in the field of change. They call this phenomenon the ‘unilevel approach’:

In practice, unilevel groups fail to be effective catalysts for spiritual transformation because of two characteristic flaws that cause them to confuse transcendent and mundane experience. First, they are overly literal and ‘definitive’ in their interpretation of language and texts, with low appreciation of symbolic and metaphoric levels of meaning . . . Second they harbour the attitude that the value as well as the proof of spiritual transformation lies in predictable, observable consequences in the mundane sphere.

Guerriere (1980 in Clarkson 1993) and Clarkson (1993) discuss the meaning of the word ‘Physis’ (which has been used synonymously with presence in this research) and its development:

Physis is the force which drives the interplay between individuality and commonality – it is the creative life force which strives for increased wholeness and increased perfection through evolutionary processes of growth and change. (Clarkson 1993)

Hence the Physis of a thing is its Being, its inner dynamism, the process by which it rises up, by which it surges forth and endures, because of which it emerges as what and how it is; its upsurgence, its presencing. (Guerriere 1980, in Clarkson 1993)

Wilbur (1977), the transpersonal psychologist, writes of a stage of development he calls the ‘higher subtle’ where individuals are able to receive information and to perceive presences from another level of consciousness:

One may speak of inspiration at this level, meaning actual messages apparently coming from a higher or deeper source. One may find affirmations useful at this stage. Some speak of the presence of guardian angels, others of the overself or higher archetypes. Rapture or bliss is common at this stage, compassion is of a high degree and widely expressed.

Heider (1985) reflects simply on the fear of Thanatos (release or death) that can prevent change agents from letting go – of their clients – or of limiting behaviours of their own:

Let go of your efforts to be perfect or rich or secure or admired. Such efforts only limit you. They block your universality.

Letting go is like dying. Everything emerges, becomes formed and dies. You too.

All creation is a single whole which works according to a single principle.

I let my selfishness go and give up the illusion of being separate. I act on behalf of the whole.

Death is not frightening because I know how to let go and I know the nature of the

Eternal.

Finally, Albert Einstein (1938) acknowledges that being human tends to mean that it's not always so easy to let go and interconnect with everything else:

A human being is present as part of the whole called by us 'Universe'. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest; a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.

Where am I now with the research as a result of the work done on this chapter?

A number of emerging themes and questions surfaced as a result of the work done on this Chapter:

- Co-researchers' assumptions that there were few texts available on the subject of presence are incorrect
- However, co-researchers' assumptions that the texts that are available present the information in an inaccessible way is true in many cases.
- Some authors appear to use language forms, thought forms and sentence structures that are complex and not easy (for me) to read: (Maslow (1954), James (1901), Erikson (1964), Lindholm (1990), Bateson (1972), are examples of these).
- Because authors have used a variety of expressions and labels for the phenomenon known in this research as presence, references are hard to find quickly in book reviews, library indices, book indices, contents sheets and bibliographies. This may be a reason that references about presences 'feel' so inaccessible and buried in other information.
- A number of authors such as Lindholm (1992), Freud (1954), Gutman (1973) and Maslow (1954), write about presence as a reality, but not about its development.
- However, authors such as Egan (1986) and Heron (1989) (1990) have produced texts in the form of 'handbooks' for change agents wishing to develop their presence within the confines of their practice. (Both these authors use the word 'presence' much as I have in this research.)

However, Egan (1986), in *The Skilled Helper* regards presence as the acquisition of basic skills and attitudes only and Heron (1990), in *Helping the Client*, may be too esoteric to appeal to change agents who are guided by mind and intellect approaches. *The Facilitator's Handbook*, also written by Heron (1989) seems to be written more generally and I believe would be of practical use to most change agents working in the field.

- Most authors seem to write about presence from the standpoint of one guiding approach only. It has been unusual to find texts that attempt to offer advice across a range of approaches. Exceptions to this, I believe, are Heron (1989) from a practical standpoint in *The Facilitator's Handbook*,

and Heider (1985) with a philosophical slant in *The Tao of Leadership*.

- Most of the authors whose texts I have arranged under list A do not appear to see presence as synonymous with personal development but more as a method of acquiring skills. In this they appear to satisfy their target audience and are in line with the stated presence-development needs of change agents working with ‘mind and intellect’ approaches.
- Texts arranged under list B seemed different in character from those in list A. The difference seems to be about development and growth and possibly the preparation of the individual for transition: a deepening and refining of earlier skills, a cautionary note about power-over issues such as charisma, instructions about modelling, working with myth and beginning to attune to psychic and spiritual energies.
- Authors whose work is arranged in list C seemed to make more judgements about where individuals should be in terms of their personal development than authors in lists A and B. Groff’s (1979) strong statement ‘*To the extent that we do not cover the transpersonal, including the spiritual, in our work with clients, we are cheating them of their birthright . . .*’ illustrates this point well.
- A greater proportion of list C texts (than those in list A and B) fall into the category of ‘difficult to read’ in terms of content, structure and language level. That some of these texts are not new (Maslow 1954, and James 1901), may explain this difficulty in part. But I believe there is an exclusivity at work here (and to my mind this is unfortunate), based on the assumption that individuals wishing to make sense of the transpersonal or the spiritual are all educated to a high academic standard, or have been involved in studying such material over a period of years. This is often but by no means always the case. My young co-researcher Louisa (see Chapter 4) is a case in point here, as are other co-researchers who have needed information but had difficulty with these texts.
- To those change agents experiencing problems with hard-to-read texts dealing with mind, body and spirit approaches, I would offer Heider (1985) *The Tao of Leadership*. This book offers simply written but eloquent support for spiritual and professional growth based on the eastern tradition. Readable too is Rowan (1993) *The Transpersonal*, which gives a clear and comprehensive overview and might be a good starting place for change agents interested in knowing more about transpersonal psychology and the frontiers of consciousness.

Where do other authors' approaches coincide with mine and how do they differ?

This question felt hard to answer because I realised that I was not comparing like with like for a number of reasons:

- Most authors appeared to write about presence in a slightly different way according to which therapeutic approaches they worked from. Few seemed to adopt an across the board view as I have attempted to do in this research. Each has a tendency to write as if theirs was the only known way of proceeding on the subject of presence.
- Most authors approach their subject from a theory standpoint. Although some have based their work on previously conducted experiments, such as Groff (1979) and Maslow (1954), these experiments were not designed to investigate presence per se, but were directed more towards examining the self-actualising individual or altered states of consciousness.
- A number of authors' experiments have been used to test out the effects of drugs (especially the psychedelics) on altering states of consciousness. Whereas my work in this area (see the work with Lynne Sedgemore in Chapter 4 and the groupwork at the Bath Conference in Chapter 3), made an attempt at working with shifting states without artificial means.
- In contrast to the theoretical stance taken by most authors, my work has been almost entirely experiential.
- Most authors' work appears to be directed towards proving a hypothesis, e.g., *'However, I am searching for an essential aspect of the peak experience . . . this is integration within the person and therefore between the person and the world'* (Maslow 1954). My approach has been more of an investigation into 'that which seems to be'.
- Some authors, particularly those working in transpersonal areas, appear to be exhibiting a judgemental attitude towards those who do not wish to work on the quality of their presence through self-development. This is not an attitude I have taken up in my work. I prefer instead to illustrate how certain sorts of developmental activity tend to lead to certain qualities of presence, which in turn appears to support different types of change approach.
- Most authors appear to agree with my findings about which particular qualities of presence are necessary for which particular therapeutic approaches to be used effectively, e.g., Nevis (1991), the organisational

Gestaltist (a mind and body approach in list B) says: *'part of the consultant's task is to provide the kind of presence which may be lacking in the client system . . .'* Such statements seem to be in alignment with my composite model of presence-development (See Figure 5).

What has it been like to carry out the intentions I stated at the beginning of this chapter?

A bit like this, actually . . .

Where are my researchers now – the interested others?
Not up all night
'til early light
They're all tucked up with lovers!

They do not care that I am here – surrounded by a heap
of books and 'mags'
and texts in bags
when I should be asleep!

Why don't these bloody authors try – to get things sorted out?
And just to please me
state nice 'n easy
what presence is about!

My husband is a patient man – but he has had enough!
The group were right
I see the light!
The literature's too tough!

I feel I have reached a plateau: a finished-for-nowness, a frustration, an excitement, a weariness, an anxiety: a sort of an about-to-give-birthness if I remember it rightly!

CHAPTER 7

Presence – My Conclusions

Finally comes the moment of birth; the sudden entry of ideas into the conscious mind – in other words true inspiration and the external product. This too like physical birth, can be easy and spontaneous or it can be difficult and painful; it may require artificial aids and at times the product is not viable. (Assagioli 1988)

I have seesawed between confusion and clarity as I have moved through the research process. This has played havoc with my work, my emotions and my social life! For example, initially, I was confused about the best way of getting the data in the first place and angry when I was told that questionnaires can't be heuristic. Then I doubted that people would want to be involved at all. Once I'd thought this through and got it clear, I became confused about what I was going to do with the data I collected – the responsibility of being entrusted with other people's stuff – anxious about communicating it in a way that makes sense in human terms.

Once I saw clearly that questionnaires could be used involvingly and creatively and that an overwhelming number of people did want to work with me, I become confused about what I wanted to ask about and how all the bits of what they told me fitted together, or gave any clear messages at all. I wasn't sure about what categories or patterns I needed to be arranging data under. If I gained some clarity about provisional headings, I was plunged back into confusion when I found that these often 'didn't work' quite in the way I had intended originally, given the data I had.

Suddenly everything was crystal clear and seemed to take off – I was immersed – then it ran away without me and I panicked. Then I found that I had completed my field work and I thought I'd got something – but heaven knows what?

Then I begun to know what I had, but I didn't know what it was worth. Was it good enough? Having this question brought back the confusion, for it's not a research question, it's a question about assessment, grading, possible success or failure. It's a child's question to a parent, and it depresses me that I still ask it.

So in order to give myself a break, I begun instead to look at the things that have undoubtedly happened in the field of change as a result of my work; what I now know that I didn't before in terms of my research questions, what still remains to be done and to reflect on the entire process.

Do I now have answers to, or illuminations on, my original research questions?

In most instances, yes, and they are arranged as ‘emerging themes’ at the end of the preceding chapters, but I shall reiterate the major ones below:

Q *Can I raise an awareness about the subject of presence in the field?*

A Yes, it has been possible. The number of people wishing to be involved through questionnaires, telephone conversations, letters, groupwork and face-to-face meetings has been substantial. These people have all been involved in some way in the field of change as consultants, counsellors, supervisors, trainers, facilitators, researchers or involved in higher education (see Chapter 2). A small number are also actors, dancers or artists. People have enthusiastically offered time, ideas, books and their own pieces of work to inform my research.

Q *How can we talk together and investigate a phenomenon as personal as presence?*

A My experiments using colour as metaphor suggest one way to overcome the problem of different labels and language difficulties when investigating presence (or other personal experiences and processes). Most co-researchers took the opportunity to express their views about presence in pictures and diagrams. These expressions gave us a common language to begin our work together. (See Chapter 2.)

Q *Can, and should, the amount of energy in presence be regulated when working in different client situations?*

A My research suggests that when the ‘appropriate’ amount of energy in presence is used in change situations, clients notice this and the work benefits as a result (see Chapter 4). It appears possible to consciously regulate and prepare presence. Meditation and visualisation techniques have been found to be effective in achieving this.

Q *Can practical exercises be used to learn about and to understand presence better?*

A Yes. The group at the Bath conference found the exercise on opening and closing presence an interesting and worthwhile experience. (See Chapter 3.)

Q *Do change agents working with different models, theories and therapeutic approaches have different needs with regard to presence development?*

A Change agents' responses to the research suggest that there may be a correlation between approach used and what needs to be learnt or experienced to develop an appropriate presence.

Q *Is presence linked to the personal development of the change agent?*

A There is some evidence to suggest that this is the case. Those change agents who are most conscious of their presence and its qualities, also tend to be people who have been developing themselves over time through meditation, study, therapy, spiritual guidance etc.

Q *Are change agents drawn towards using certain therapeutic approaches in their practices because they have a certain kind of presence?*

A Change agents who have developed themselves through the methods mentioned above, tend to choose therapeutic approaches that deal with the mind, body and spirit to guide their practices. Change agents who are less conscious of their presence and its qualities appear to be less fully aware of how or why they choose the therapeutic approaches they do.

Q *Most change agents appear to believe that little literature exists to guide their presence development work. Is this true?*

A No, there are many texts written on and around the subject of presence (see Chapter 6).

Q *Some change agents believe that texts are available but that they aren't very 'user friendly' in terms of their language and structure.*

A My research would confirm this assumption. Many authors writing about presence use different labels to describe the phenomenon and therefore, the subject of presence is difficult to find in content sheets, bibliographies etc. There are, however, exceptions to this (see Chapter 6). There is surprisingly little written on practical exercises designed to meet the presence development needs of those working with a variety of different approaches.

What remains to be done that hasn't been covered in my work?

As this work is an initial illumination and a voyage of discovery around the field of change to see what interest there is in presence and what change agents feel is important, there remains much to be done to build on and deepen the work I have started:

- Some of my conclusions are a little ‘ambitious’ and need wider and possibly less random sampling to be conclusive, especially those that link presence to levels of development and therapeutic approaches. Another important factor might be that because I worked with individuals who ‘chose’ to work with me, not all approaches were represented in my sample.
- The wider, social implications of some of my work need further exploration, e.g. the aggressive or defensive postures taken up by people meeting a closed presence and the possible confusion over sexual intention attached to open presence.
- Some deeper exploration of how cultural differences affect how we ‘read’ another’s presence might be of value to those working with change situations in multi-ethnic communities.
- A collection and collation of suitable presence-development exercises for use by trainers and tutors might be of benefit.
- A further ‘trawl’ of the literature is necessary to gather all references in existence on presence and associated subjects.

A review of the process: what went well and what didn’t!

I believe I have done some things well, and others not so well. There are other things that I would change next time round. Most of these negatives and positives have been documented in the ‘Where am I now . . .’ sections at the end of each of the preceding chapters. I list below some of the more general ‘celebrations’ and ‘disappointments’:

- The heuristic process cannot be rushed and does not fit very well into someone else’s timescales (in this case Surrey University’s). It needs to be finished when it is finished and not before. Although it has been a year since I started this work, it was not ready to be concluded. Consequently, I have ‘pushed the river’ a little and have not been true to the heuristic process, particularly in Chapters 5 and 6, where I have ignored my inner processes to some extent and taken a more analytical stance. (The reader may be aware of a change of pace and style in these chapters. I cannot tell how welcome or unwelcome this will be but it does at least provide contrast!) Given the timescales I had, a different research method might have been indicated.

- Moustakas (1990) states that *‘the deepest currents of meaning and knowledge take place within the individual, through one’s senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgements. This requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it illuminates or answers.’* I believe I have brought all my senses, perceptions and beliefs to bear upon this work and as a result I have changed and developed with it and through it. That I have been passionate and intense about my subject is also true. The downside of this (see chapter 3) is that there have been times when I have been over-protective and over-immersed; hopefully this has not been to the detriment of the research overall. I have amazed myself with my self-discipline and commitment to getting this work done – well (I hope), and on time. I thought it would be difficult to fit it into my busy life, and it has been. I’m aware that I have tended to arrange my life around the work and given it a priority over other activities that has surprised me.
- *‘Research can never be neutral’*, say Reason and Rowan (1981). *‘It is always supporting or questioning social forces, both by its content and by its method.’* I have been aware of my lack of neutrality. My biases have been apparent – in my choice of this subject over others, my choice of research method over others, what I chose to include and what I chose to leave out. (For example, I was made aware in some recent feedback that I have omitted to use any of the many references to presence in texts written about neurolinguistic programming. My personal bias finds this approach (particularly when unskillfully used) offensive and controlling. However, its omission was out of my awareness until pointed out to me).
- *‘Research has effects and side effects and these benefit and harm people’*, warn Reason et al. (1981). My wish was to be of service to the field of change through my work and certainly not to harm people. However, I am aware that co-researchers have trusted me with some very sensitive, live material. I’m grateful for their trust and have done the checking and re-checking necessary to protect their confidences. But I have learnt through this work that the quality of my presence means that people can be carried away by my passions and enthusiasms. I hope that is not the case here, but it’s hard to be 100% sure.
- It has been important to try to bring a quality that I know as ‘grace’ to the work. I haven’t always succeeded; my fear of failure, over-protectiveness about the research, ego-centred competitiveness and the odd unattractive tantrum when my computer failed to cooperate, haven’t been graceful at all. Where I have been more successful, I believe, is in my struggle to integrate what I’ve learnt from this work into my own presence, my life and to use it in my practice. This has involved turning a ‘passion’ into

something practical and useful.

I leave Gregory Bateson (1972) to have the last word:

I shall argue that the problem of grace is fundamentally a problem of integration and that what is to be integrated is the diverse parts of the mind – especially those multiple levels of which one extreme is called ‘consciousness’ and the other the ‘unconscious’.

For the attainment of grace, the reasons of the heart must be integrated with the reasons of reason.

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