



Relational Therapy – A View

There are a number of core concepts in the Transactional Analysis model, which provide a framework and map for understanding our internal emotional landscapes and structures. The concept of “script” suggests that people will often make decisions about themselves and draw conclusions about life from a very young age. Such decisions are made out of conscious awareness, and at the time, they constitute the best option for survival in a world that for myriad reasons, social and environmental, may be frightening, incomprehensible or even life-threatening. A Transactional Analysis approach will invite curiosity about the origin of our script decisions as well as exploration and recognition of how we may maintain and live these (outdated) decisions in our current lives.

No one is an expert on life, and no psychological theory or method holds the monopoly on insight, wisdom or cure. When I first meet a client(s), I am interested in engaging with a whole person and not just the problem they may bring. Each therapeutic encounter is different, since each of us has our unique experience of being a person in the world. Working from a relational perspective, I offer a willingness to engage in a process with my client(s) rather than a promise of certain knowledge. A relational approach is paced and reflective. It does not rush towards interpretation or refrain from appropriate challenge. It involves elements of risk, including that of knowing and not knowing. When we believe we know ourselves (and for that matter another) we perhaps take ourselves for granted, assume our identities as fixed and neglect or foreclose on our greater depths and potentials. Therapy can offer an opportunity for us to be curious about ourselves and to track, understand and challenge our assumptions both about others and ourselves.

I am always interested in the (often) impoverished stories that people tell themselves about the world and the enduring and sometimes debilitating impact that they may confer, physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and relationally. In the speaking of and the listening to these stories it is possible that new stories may begin to be imagined. The therapeutic endeavour will be in part to hold a space in which we may tell, retell, de- and reconstruct and constitute the stories of our selves, such that we might understand more profoundly our appetite (or lack of it) for life.

Uncertainty is an inevitable part of being alive. Perhaps the only real certainty is that we will, one day, die. We are all subject to the urgencies and vulnerabilities of our bodies and our histories are written deep within its archaeology. Our bodies have much to tell us of our selves beyond logic, reason or words. A relational therapy is sensitive to the sometimes inarticulate speech of our more visceral selves, revealed at once in a movement or gesture, a tone of voice or rhythm of speech, a word, a silence. It is in the simple (and complex) practice of listening that I may begin to understand how experience has informed and shaped an individual’s sense of self. The relational practitioner is never a neutral observer but rather an active participant in the therapeutic process, always sensitive to news from within herself about what s/he is thinking and feeling and what this might mean for a client.



I believe that poetry, literature and art have much to tell us about the complexity of human existence and consistently seek to resource myself from these worlds. Sometimes we find ourselves moved to tears of joy or sorrow by the power of musical phrase or lyric, disarmed despite ourselves, absorbed in the experiencing of it, feeling at once known, understood, connected and transcendent. It is this capacity to experience, how we sustain and sabotage it, to enlivening or deadening effect that is of great interest to me and describes something of my own curiosity about the therapeutic endeavour. The language of therapy is at once pragmatic and practical, poetic and evocative, always unique to the individuals involved.

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