

Extending the Contexts

Transcript of conversation

between Shona Russell, Rob Hall and Maggie Carey

Shona: I'd like to speak a little bit about the counseling work here. That's been a big focus of mine over the last 2 1/2 years, to establish a place here that focuses on a narrative approach to counseling work in a range of different contexts. I've been really pleased to form a connection with an organization for homeless people here, where they find the work really relevant to them. That's been really important. Also that we are able to offer services to people experiencing complex and long term mental health difficulties, and they are finding relevance here...

An initiative that we started this year, 2011, has been for the three of us to work together as a team one afternoon a fortnight, working with people with complex needs. We're still working that out but our intention is very much to be available to workers and teams. I wonder if you could say a bit more about that.

Rob: This is an interesting development. In a number of the meetings where Michael talked about setting up the centre was the hope to return to doing direct work with people with complex needs. Through the counseling and therapeutic work we've been doing, we've been able to offer to a number of organizations that provide support for people that are homeless or are having mental health difficulties a framework for the workers to understand how they can best be helpful in that scenario, but also to offer direct counseling to clients as well. We are starting to explore how we can work as a team, to work collectively around those clients/ You might want to comment more on witnessing and so far.

Maggie: To have opportunities for people to experience some audience to develop new stories, the idea of working together, with that possibility.

Shona: And ...when we are working as a team, we are offering a different experience for people who are leaving prison re-integrating back into the community, or people that are homeless. The work is not being constructed around an individual relationship but it is being constructed around a group of interested practitioners of support. They are conversations of support, which is one of the things we are enthusiastic about in responding differently in wanting to consciously provide something structured differently.

Maggie: Very exciting.

Shona: And it's going to take a bit of commitment to work it out. There are some practical details.

Speaking about organizations. One of the things I'm really pleased about the directions we're developing is our ongoing networks in other local organizations in Adelaide through our work, and through the invitations to be external supervisors to their workers, and to be constantly

involved in training their workers. There is quite a growing list of those organizations in Adelaide. That is something I feel really pleased about. It's about the accountability of how we are working, the ethic of our work and the sentiment and skill of our work.

Rob: It also reflects in the training, doesn't it? If the work is directly related and accountable, then the training is also relevant and directly related to the therapeutic work and the community work that we do.

Shona: That exciting, isn't it? At another time, Rob, you might like to share a very exciting time in training here with an ongoing course we were running, at those three days working with men around violence, around the minucha of the work, question by question by question, And at the end, participants all said, "Can we have more of that?" Maybe we can talk about that another time?" That was exciting wasn't it?

Rob: Yes it was.

Maggie: YES. We need to go have some lunch right now, But It has been really lovely to think about these connections and links here in Adelaide and all around the world. Thinking about the way Michael's spirit and ethic of being in the world goes on in lovely ways.

We are very fortunate.

Rob. It's interesting how the organizations we're talking to –who provide the financial support for the services– how enthusiastic they are around these ideas and the potential they can offer to look at their own lives and their experience, and how they negotiate their lives differently.