

## Reflections after the Intimacy and Humanifying Practice Conference. Singapore, April 2018.

Nur Ameesha Mohd Sharif

Volume 1

Issue 2

Autumn 2018

### Keywords:

*Intimacy, observation,  
reflection, learning,  
systemic, heart, mind*

### Citation Link

I thought I'd begin this little reflection of mine by sharing a piece of thought that I had after listening to one of the keynote speeches,

*What happens when your dance with Intimacy does not beat to the  
rhythm of someone else's dance?*

*How can we begin to allow that space for the offbeat-ness to exist?*

*What will invite us to dance in the offbeat-ness to create a new rhythm?  
Perhaps, taking the risk of allowing your being to be in the offbeat-ness is*

*necessary,*

*to allow for our senses to be aware that even in the offbeat-ness,  
there can be rhythm.*

Well, that was the small fragment of my thought that I managed to write before I got crazily involved in all other things that happened on that day.

That aside, I must say, before attending the same workshop twice on the second day, I had expected that I would experience the same thing for both sessions. Oh, was I proven so wrong. I was grateful to have been able to experience both groups for these sessions.

At first, being in the room made me feel a little small - well in this context, I for one, am someone who is still exploring the waters of systemic ideas. But I chose not to allow that to hold me back in my thinking and being, instead I chose to do what I love to do - to observe and reflect, to also observe my observation.

My eyes saw many expressions - some with faces beaming with excitement to share their thoughts, some just a little bit hesitant - perhaps afraid of saying the "wrong things". Some had eyes burning with fire, as though ready to allow their flame to burn brighter with their thoughts. Some choosing to take a step back, to observe others and their thoughts. Some pushing themselves to think beyond what's obvious - beyond what the senses can catch.

My ears heard brilliant ideas and thoughts, slowly making their way out of each individual's train of thought, into the wide field - albeit the fear that perhaps the thought may just be a small seed in the wide field. Then came this thought in my mind: No matter how small a seed, we never know how

big this seed will grow. We don't even know if the seed will grow, whether the seed is even a seed. We may think that this seed will grow into an apple tree, but what happens if or when it grows into an orange tree instead?

Apples and oranges led my mind on a journey to think about risk-taking. What is it about risk-taking which has perhaps created a "make or break" thinking about risk-taking? What colour is risk-taking? Is it black? Is it white? Is it a mix? Or is it playing in the spaces of grey? Does it need to have a colour? When we make the decision to take risks, which part of our being, makes or contributes to that decision? Is it the physical self? Is it the heart? Is it the mind? I wonder.

Wait. Let's take a pause right here.

What was it that had allowed for me to observe and think about the things I was observing and thinking about in the way that I did? Was it in the difference of the dynamics between the groups of both workshops? Was it about the people present or the safe space created for exploration? Taking a step back, I imagine that for me, it was the space for deliberation and understanding.

The space that observation is made observable. The space that values conversation about the observer observing the observed. It is my work space. It is the transcontextual space. I may be doing admin, but the administrative function is not limited to papers and files. The *PPIS Family Therapy Institute* where I work is the space that had allowed for the incongruence between the perception of ideas to surface. It was also a space where practitioners perhaps connected and disconnected, at times without realising that the disconnection was also an invitation for connection through clarification. It was a space where practitioners experienced intimacy in the professional context – through the various lenses they have been lensing with.

Thinking about intimacy in the professional context then had me wondering about professional intimacy. What does professional intimacy mean to me? Is professional intimacy about professional upholding ethics or are ethics used to professionalised intimacy? I do not know what it really means. But at this phase of my development with systemic thinking, professional intimacy does sound like a much-needed idea for me to think about. The phrase *professional intimacy* brings about in me a curiosity about the inter-relatedness between professionalism and intimacy. Will intimacy be lost in the presence of professionalism? Will professionalism, in turn, be compromised when intimacy is present? How can intimacy be talked about professionally or with professionals?

In the wanders of my mind, I envision professional intimacy to go beyond just splatters of water on sand. This conference had allowed me to witness the beginning of difficult conversations – difficult but necessary.

There is also the importance of trans-contextual conversations. Each practitioner holds multiple roles across multiple contexts and each practitioner has experiences unique to their journey as a practitioner. My mind is electrified at the thought of more platforms for such conversations and perhaps even gathering of data to further expand the practice. It was indeed humbling to witness practitioners united in conversations, within a space where multiple contexts intertwine and humanity is one. Wait a second! Perhaps, professional intimacy is an invitation for professionals to develop and humanify conversation around intimacy where interplay of context[s] can exist.

Allow me to end this reflection with a piece I wrote more recently when my train of thought was moving along the tracks of “heart or mind?”, which I thought was apt for my first experience of a conference this scale:

*I was just noticing.  
 Instead of letting my heart feel, I process it a lot with my mind.  
 The mind then tells the heart to be stronger, to not falter so easily.  
 To know what my priorities are - perhaps this is what scares the feelings away.  
 Because the familiar way to go is to push them away.*

*But this was something different.  
 It was something in the way I was feeling.  
 It was something in the rhythm that my heart started beating to.  
 It was something in the warmth I felt on my face.  
 It was something in the way I was being responded to.*

*There was something in the fact that the attention was on me.  
 Something in the fact that I was answering more than I was questioning.  
 Something in the fact that the spotlight was equally on me and my being.  
 Something in the connection of the disconnections which exist in our beings.*

*It was surprisingly not uncomfortable, but rather,  
 there was comfort in the discomfort going on.  
 It was scary, but for a moment there I chose to set the heart free.  
 I allowed my heart to feel, allowed my heart to dance with the ever-changing beats.*

*But not for long -  
 The mind decides to step in, pushing the heart back where it was.*

*I wonder.  
 In such, how much of what is going on in your mind is guided by your heart?  
 And how much of what is going on in your heart,  
 is stopped by the analyses of the mind?*

*Then came a question: What I just wrote, was that the heart or the mind?*

### **Author**

**Nur Ameesha Mohd Sharif**

Email: nura.mdsharif@ppis.sg

### **Citation**

Mohd Sharif, Nur Ameesha (2018). Reflections following the Intimacy and Humanifying Conference. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice*, 1, 2, 107-109. <https://doi.org/10.28963/1.2.10>