

Meeting the Different Parts of Ourselves -- Workshop Report

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This workshop happened on June 21st 2003. A lovely sunny day, a superb venue in the countryside on a farm with really good food -- all combined to form the setting of something both inspiring and transformational. I felt awed to spend a day in the presence of a group of wonderful human beings (including at least one Imageworker) who were willing to take risks in the service of their own growth.

In the morning, after a check-in, we had a lecture complete with notes on the theory of subpersonalities. This was followed by a meditative exercise designed to elicit ideas of what subpersonalities were special to each participant. The remainder of the morning was taken up by "The House of Subpersonalities" -- a full-blown Imagework exercise with sharing in pairs followed by sharing in the group. One of the suggestions that came to me during the facilitation of this exercise proved particularly valuable -- I asked participants, when they were exploring the basement of their "house", to look to check to see whether there was anything shut up in a cage down there. This proved particularly fertile and all sorts of interesting image beings were discovered.

All of these processes were punctuated by short bodywork exercises designed to get us back into our bodies and sensations -- a sort of reset after each process.

All of the morning's work was designed to develop an increasingly detailed picture of what subpersonalities were important at this stage of each individual's journey. This provided material that each participant might want to work on during the afternoon -- to do further exploration, to resolve conflict or to promote healing and understanding.

After lunch, we reconvened with an acting game called "Pussy's in the corner" which involves a lot of shouting and running about -- great fun. We then settled into an audience/performing space format and, one at a time, everyone came up and did a piece of facilitated work with some of their subpersonalities.

I subdivided the "stage" two-thirds/one-third by a coloured rope. On the one-third side was a large heap of different cushions which were there to represent various subpersonalities. This was the side of the integrated personality from which the participant could witness what was going on and make decisions about what needed to happen next.

The other two-thirds of the stage was the area for the subpersonalities. Each was represented by a cushion selected by the participant and placed where they felt appropriate. In order to become each subpersonality, they simply stood behind their cushion and literally showed us the subpersonality, how it stood, how it spoke, how it related to the other subpersonalities. We found out what its feelings were, what its needs were, what it wanted -- and played out all sorts of moving interactions which ranged from practical negotiations to a full-scale funeral involving the entire workshop!

At the beginning of each piece of work, I invited each participant to make as deep a contact with the people in the "audience" as possible using them as support and as witnesses. This actor/audience relationship when ringed about with enough safety and boundaries provides an environment in which it is okay to take some risks. It feels scary and at the same time safe -- rather like a bouncy castle for the emotions! Also, at the beginning of each piece of work, the first piece of dialogue I had was with the "protector-controller" of each participant. This is the subpersonality which is the first to form when we are very tiny and acts to keep us safe. It is absolutely vital to get permission from this one before proceeding with the work.

After a very moving (and quite long) afternoon, we had a break and then did a final process which served to bring us back to the thinking level in order to define the next task in this exploratory process, to choose tools we might want to use and look at what support we might need to do this.

A long, moving and awe-inspiring day which I felt enormously privileged to facilitate.

You can see some of the feedback here:

<http://www.interactive-consultancies.co.uk/workshops/feedback.htm>

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information@interactive-consultancies.co.uk