

PART 1 REFLECTIVE DIARY SEPTEMBER 2009-CODED EXCERPT

29TH September

Well at last I have carved out 30 minutes to begin the diary. It's been hard to get to this point. I have been feeling guilt about not starting this earlier. I feel I would have liked to make more progress on my doctorate planning. But the reality is that I have not and I think I just need to get over that!

I have worked on evidencing my previous learning and feel encouraged as I reflect on the past. I feel encouraged because of the determination I have clearly put in to developing a high level of skill in a range of areas over time and indeed over two distinct careers. However today has been a day with a little doubt in it. I facilitated a group discussion of a number of senior clinicians—it lasted 2 hours and people said they appreciated my chairing and I think my interventions, particularly a description of a leadership model relevant to their challenges, were helpful. But I felt vulnerable. I was drawn into their dynamics and would have preferred greater distance. Half way through the session I wondered if I had contracted well enough for the work—it feels a little loose—not enough around clear expectations of me.

I am conscious that tiredness is part of my experience at the moment. It affects my concentration and I think my listening and observational skills. That means I am less able to host conversations well is my learning!

Comment [s1]: 3

I guess that tiredness also meant less motivation to get on with doctoral work although I need to recognise that I am also very busy at work and also am preparing for my 50th birthday party. A lot is going on.

It was good to speak with Annette last week. Her enthusiasm and positive encouragement seems to spark interest in me—I want to get going. Conversation with her ignited energy and interest.

Comment [s2]: 3

She suggested some questions—or did I suggest them to myself as I spoke:

Who am I as a researcher?

What is my paradigm?

What is right in my face—what am I missing?

What is the type of knowledge I like to produce (or create)?

What works for me and would make me change my practice?

What would make me change myself?

These all seem to be very helpful questions to me—a nice start to an exploration. I still need more—in the sense of a wider perspective of what my research will look like and who I will be in it—but this is a start.

22nd October 2009

I'm enjoying a holiday in San Francisco. I enjoy this city life—the skyscrapers, the views, the food, the trams and the boats. All combine to help me rest. I have slept a great deal. I think I became over tired during September. Work has been very demanding with little time for reflection—so now, towards the end of my break a chance to catch my breath. I think was prompted this entry in my log is a documentary I have just finished watching. I woke up at about 6.30am and switched the TV on. It was a record of the life of a couple born deaf and their journey into the world of the hearing when they both received a cochlear implant at the age of 65. Both had experienced a full life, raising a family and holding down jobs. They had learned to lip read to an exceptional extent. The man had been instrumental in creating an electric communication tool that had enabled deaf people to write to one another across the world through the telephone lines. It had been a significant innovation of its time.

Your assumption might be that when given a transplant life would change immeasurably for the better...but that turned out to be false. New struggles emerged for this couple as they grappled with the impact of the transplant and each handled it in their own way. As I watch and was very moved by what I witnessed I began to realise that there were many insights here for those of us who work with conversation as an approach.

Firstly, all the sounds they heard when the implant was switched on for the first time needed to be learned by the brain. Their brains had no knowledge of what it was hearing, no reference point. It was starting from scratch in building up a data bank of noises. The audiologist talked of the couple having old brains, which take time to learn new stuff. I wondered what it is for us who have hearing, we make assumptions about what we hear, and our brains and my brain have a pattern of recognition. Those things it has learned to hear and other things it blanks out. I was moved as the woman talked of her puzzlement that the waves and water could make a noise. She pondered what made the noise, how did it happen. She similarly expressed surprise that the wind made so much noise.

What noises do I habitually listen to?

What might I be missing?

How might I become more responsive as a hearer?

What does learning to listen actually mean in practice?

What might help me learn to listen to new sounds?

Comment [s3]: 8

What stops me listening well?

It was interesting watching them both come to terms with listening in different ways and in different timescales. The woman really struggled emotionally. She often switched the implant off and sometimes mishandled it deliberately. It as like she was angry with it. She did not want to listen or perhaps was mourning the loss of being in the world of deafness? She often compared herself with the progress apparently being made by her husband believing that she was no good. I wondered what impact hearing will have on me, how will it change who I am as a person. Do I have to mourn the loss of my old self? What does that mean. I think I also like to compare myself. How does that impact on how I am when I listen to others? Lots of thought provoking questions.

As time moved on they both adjusted to hearing in different ways, often switching the machines off at different times, wanting a break from noise. Some environments like shops seemed very noisy to them, overwhelmingly so and they then switched the machines off.

When is it too noisy for me?

Comment [s4]: 8

When do I switch off?

What is the impact of that for me?

When would it be good for me to turn down my hearing?

What would happen, what might I miss, what might I gain?

I wonder what hearing is for other people and what is the difference between hearing and listening. Perhaps how are they connected?

It was at the end of the programme that I was struck the most. Hearing it seemed had not been all that it was cracked up to be. They had lived their lives happily without it and now it seemed almost like an intrusion. In talking with the man, his daughter, reflected that what had been his great sense of achievement was not hearing again but rather the original invention and asked why it was because it had enabled people to *connect* and this was the most important thing. It was not the voice or ears that mattered it was that human beings connected with one another. I was very moved.

What does it mean to connect?

How do I know I am in connection?

How do we know we are in connection?

What role do the senses have in supporting connection?

What else supports connection?

What need or needs are met when we connect?

Is there a quality of connection?

How might I know more connection?

Comment [s5]: 1 2 6