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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first Arabic handbook about narrative approaches to therapy, group work, and community work. This publication describes some of the key ideas and practices of narrative therapy and includes skilful and thoughtful examples of practice from Palestinian therapists.

The history of the work described in these pages goes back to 2005. This was the year when a partnership developed between The Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture¹(TRC) and Dulwich Centre Foundation International² (Dulwich Centre, in Australia, is one of the homes of narrative therapy). Since 2005, this partnership has involved building the capacity of TRC workers in relation to their use of narrative practices through regular trainings, supervision, documenting initiatives in TRC therapists' work, supporting TRC workers to become teachers of narrative approaches, and creating this handbook. From 2009-2011 this partnership was supported by the European Commission³.

TRC therapists are now offering trainings in narrative approaches not only in Palestine but also in other Arabic speaking countries. This handbook has been designed to be used in these training contexts and we hope it will assist Arabic therapists in different parts of the world.

This handbook consists of four parts. The first describes the broader context of the narrative therapy work of the counsellors of TRC in Palestine. The second documents a number of key narrative therapy practices and includes examples from Palestinian therapists. Part Three conveys how narrative ideas are being used with groups and communities. And Part Four describes how the TRC counsellors are trying to open possibilities for conversations around very difficult topics.

DR MAHMUD SEHWAIL TRC

CHERYL WHITE

Dulwich Centre Foundation International

NOTES

- 1. See www.trc-pal.org
- 2. For more information about the work of Dulwich Centre see: www.dulwichcentre.com.au
- 3. The three year project funded by the European Commission was entitled: Sustaining and enhancing comprehensive, Community based service delivery to victims of torture and politically motivated violence living in the north and south of the west bank.



PART ONE:

The context of the work of Palestinian trauma counsellors

THESE ARE OUR TRUTHS: SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE OF THREE PALESTINIAN PSYCHOLOGISTS

Wael, Jamal and Hussam are three psychologists from the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture in Palestine. The three of us have all been imprisoned. We are psychologists and we are also ex-detainees. Today we decided to talk about our experiences, and to listen to each other in the hope that this will assist others. All Palestinian men are highly likely to be arrested at a certain point of time. By sharing our knowledge we can assist each other. Sometimes experiences in prison make you think of your weak points. So it is all the more important for ex-detainees to acknowledge the strong points.

There are many truths that we know.

- 1. We know what it is like to be imprisoned.
- 2. We know what it is like to be put into a small cell underground with no light.
- 3. Some of us know what it is like to experience shabih.
- 4. We know what it is like to be called a number not a name.
- 5. We know how much we longed for our family and friends when we were in prison.
- 6. We know what it is like to have others trying to destroy the self and our desire for life.
- 7. We know what it is like to be driven into the corner.
- 8. We know what it is like when others are telling us we are liars. We know the challenge to prove we are telling the truth, despite all their efforts to cast doubt: despite many hours of interrogation, when 12 people are surrounding you noticing each gesture, each movement, even despite the use of liedetectors that always say you are lying. We know the challenge to prove we are telling the truth.
- 9. We know how awful these experiences can be.
- 10. And we know how to reclaim our lives.

This knowledge is valuable. These truths are valuable. We use this knowledge now. We use it with the ex-detainees we work with.

When other ex-detainees know we have been in prison they feel more comfortable. Seeing how we have reclaimed our lives brings them hope. And we also have hope for them, because we know that we have passed through the hardest times, the times that they are now living. We know that they used special skills to get through their time in prison and we talk about this together.

One of us also said, 'During my time in the prison, I also used my psychology skills with someone else who was in the cell. He had epilepsy and I assisted him'. At this point, the Executive Director of TRC said 'We will pay you overtime'. And there was much laughter.

These are our truths. These are truths from Palestine. We use all that we know to assist others. Please share our truths with the rest of the world.

When trauma is not past: Palestinian perspectives on responding to trauma and torture

DR MAHMUD SEHWAIL (EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT TRC)

The idea of starting the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (TRC) derived from my experience of visiting prisons. I worked as a psychiatric consultant in the Bethlehem Mental Hospital for ten years and duringthat time visited Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. I conducted 360 visits. Each time I entered a prisonl said it would be the last time. But it never was. There was no law or legal sanction prohibiting torture in Israeli prisons until 1999, and physical and psychological abuses continue today, particularly within interrogations. During my visits to prisons I noticed that many Palestinian detainees, after they had been tortured, suffered long-lasting negative effects. I also noticed that ex-detainees were not seeking help once they had been released. Mainstream services were not equipped to respond to their experiences, and the physical design of the services can even remind ex-detainees of settings in which they were mistreated. And so we started thisorganisation in 1997 under the umbrella of a humanrights organisation.

The context of our work is very different than trauma centres in many countries. What our people experience is not 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD). The trauma is not past, it is not 'post', it is continuing. We deal with what we have come to call Continuing Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD). More than 80% of our clients suffer from multiple traumas. It is not one single act of trauma that we experienceand then try to recover from. For many individuals and families, events occur on a regular basis, if not on a daily basis, that remind them of past traumas. This has significant implications for the provision of psychological services. We are sometimes offered training from other countries in PTSD, but we try to explain that we need to develop our own way of responding to the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves. When army incursions routinely take

place, shooting is heard in the night and houses are demolished, or when checkpoints are closed and harassment takes place, or when we cannot visit family members in other Palestinian towns and villages, these are repeated, continuing traumatic events. We have needed to develop ways of responding to trauma when the individuals and families with whom we are working are living under occupation.

As an organisation, we respond to people who have been imprisoned, and families in which loved ones have been killed or injured. We respond to families who are now experiencing difficulties between themselves, even abuse within families. This is one half of our work: to respond in healing ways to those who have been subjected to torture and trauma. The rest of our efforts are put towards the prevention of further human rights abuses. Through training, campaigning, the use of the media and documentation, we work towards building an atmosphere in this region of respect and openness. We work towards creating a Palestinian culture that rejects all forms of human rights violations, in particular politically motivated torture and violence. We respond to the consequences of violence and torture wherever it occurs, and whoever it is perpetrated by. For instance, we are involved in training other Palestinian organisations in mental health and human rights issues. This training is provided to other health professionals and also to current members of the Palestinian security forces.

We are continuing to set out to create a civil society, to promote the democratic system, to reconnect people with hopes and dreams when they are despairing. We are continuing our work to develop an approach to healing that is linked to human rights issues and that responds to people who have not only experienced past traumas but who are continually facing very difficult circumstances which can bring alive the events, feelings and thoughts of the past.

The links between healing, psychotherapy and human rights

KHADER RASRAS (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRC)

Within our work we are very interested in the links between healing, psychotherapy and human rights. I used to be a human rights activist and, in addition to now being a psychologist, I have a powerful interest in human rights and democracy. At all times, we are emphasising the need for respect of human rights. Our counselling or psychological work is not separate from advocating for human rights in this region. They are totally connected. Of course, when we call for human rights to be respected, we are not only calling for Palestinian human rights. Human rights relate to everybody. I sympathise with the innocent people who are being killed on both sides. I sympathise with all those people who are just trying to live their normal lives and yet violence and trauma has had devastating effects.

Throughout the process of offering healing and psychotherapy, we also try to notice when people are making a stand for other people's human rights. There might be examples in their own family. These examples might only consist of small remarks, or statements, but if people are indicating a respect for the human rights of others, then we try to notice this and acknowledge it. These are openings to different stories of identity, stories of values and stories of agency. There are also ways of linking their small contributions to the small contributions of others. I believe we all have parts to play in protecting and speaking up for the human rights of others.

Whenever we work with people, one aim is to ensure they are taken care of. A second aim is to assist in preventing them from becoming a source of violence themselves. When men or women have been subjected to violence, imprisonment or political violence, we wish to take care to ensure that they don't then take this out on their families. Trying to prevent the victimisation of children is one of our key aims.

There is also a broader question involved here, in relation to retaliation. We try to create room for people to understand that if you were tortured by one person of a nation, then this doesn't reflect the identity of the whole nation. I find it a moral responsibility to create space for any victim of violence or abuse to acknowledge that other peoplealso suffer from the current crisis in this region and that others also have their own traumas. If we wantother people to acknowledge our pain and our trauma, we must also be brave enough and wise enough to acknowledge the trauma of others. We are always conscious in our work not to be supporting philosophies of retaliation.

We draw clear distinctions between notions of retaliation and the search for justice. It is very important for people who have been abused orvictimised to be able to seek some form of redress, some form of justice, some form of powerfu lacknowledgement of the terrible harm that has been done to them. Justice can be powerfully healing and yet is not often spoken about within the psychological field. When people have felt so powerless to prevent the abuse that was happening to them or their loved ones, the desire for justice can be very strong. Unfortunately, we are very rarely in a position to bring the particular perpetrator to justice. But we try to provide avenues, where possible, for people to document their experiences. We try to create forums of acknowledgement for what they have been subjected to. We try to create space for the considerations of healing and justice, rather than retaliation and further violence.

We are interested in talking with others about the links between healing, psychotherapy and human rights. One way that we are making these links is through the use of narrative therapy practices.

Healing and justice: Story-telling rights

When we experience significant trauma and injustice such as imprisonment, torture, the loss of loved ones, abuse and/or other human rights violations, this can have profound effects in our lives. As Khader Rasras (2005) describes:

'Torture can render a person hopeless, broken and unproductive. Sometimes people may have felt completely hopeless, powerless, weak and shamed when alone in prison. What is more, if a person has been kept in a cell and treated like an animal, the person can cometo think they are almost an animal.' (p.58)

When people have had many of their human rights violated and then turn to counsellors, psychologists and/or therapists for assistance, it is vitally important to consider their 'rights' in how their lives are spoken about.

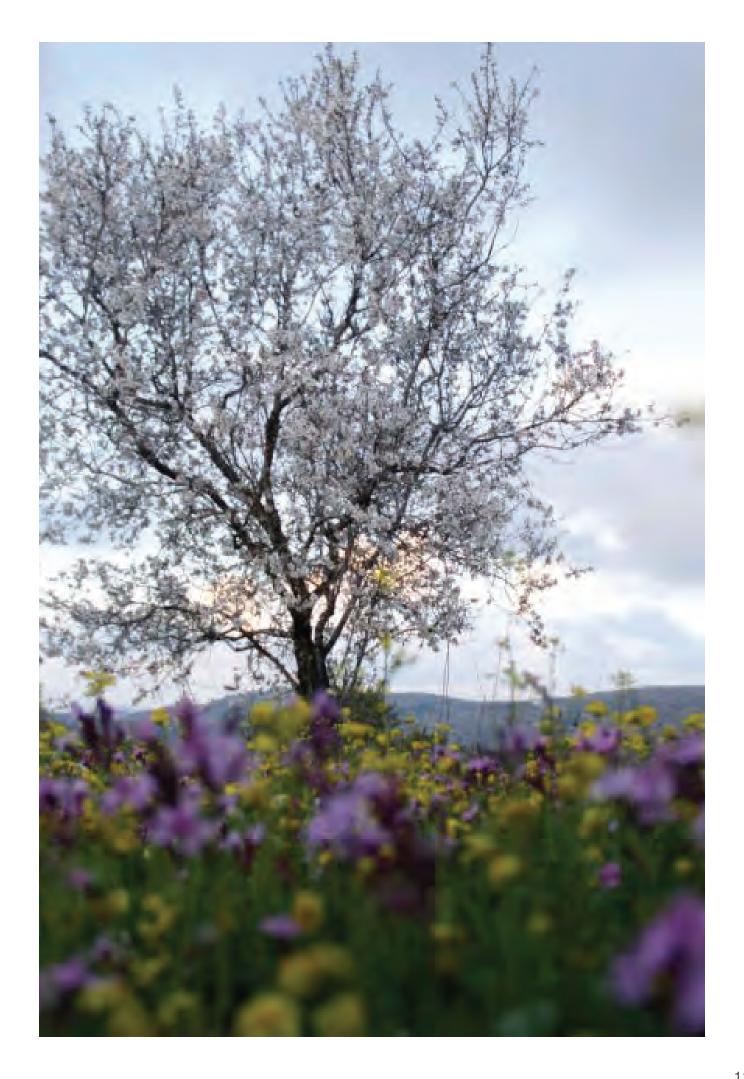
Because the difficulties people are experiencing are the result of trauma, injustice and human rights violations, narrative therapy responses to trauma take very seriously people's 'storytelling rights'.

Narrative therapy defends people's rights to name their own experiences, to define their own problems, to honour their skills in survival and resistance, and to explore how their relationships, history and culture can contribute to reclaiming their lives from the effects of trauma.

The narrative therapy charter of story-telling rights

- **ARTICLE 1** Everyone has the right to define their experiences and problems in their own words and terms.
- **ARTICLE 2** Everyone has the right for their life to be understood in the context of what they have been through and in the context of their relationships with others.
- **ARTICLE 3** Everyone has the right to include others who are important to them in the process of reclaiming their life from the effects of trauma.
- ARTICLE 4 Everyone has the right to be free from having problems caused by trauma and injustice located inside them, internally, as if there is some deficit in them. The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem.
- ARTICLE 5 Everyone has the right for their responses to trauma to be acknowledged. No one is a passive recipient of trauma. People always respond. People always protest injustice.
- **ARTICLE 6** Everyone has the right to have their skills and knowledges of survival and resistance respected, honoured and acknowledged.
- **ARTICLE 7** Everyone has the right to know and experience that what they have learnt through hardship can make a contribution to others in similar situations.

The narrative therapy charter of story-telling rights was developed by David Denborough while visiting the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Ramallah.







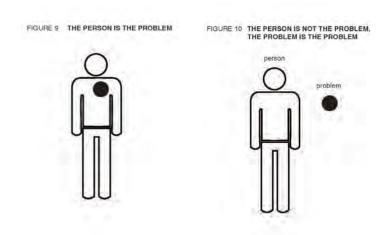
PART TWO:

Narrative therapy practices

This section describes six different key narrative therapy practice maps.

The person is not the problem – externalising problems

Narrative therapy enables people to define their own problems using their own terms and language. It also ensures that problems are not located internally or inside people. This process is called 'externalising problems'. When people have been subjected to human rights violations it is all the more important to ensure that their difficulties are not located internally.



One aim of externalising conversations is to make it possible for people to experience an identity that is separate from the problem; the problem becomes the problem, not the person. The problem ceases to represent the 'truth' about people's identities, and options for successful problem resolution become more visible. Externalising conversations increase a sense of personal agency, diminish guilt and blame, and enable people to collaborate in order to lessen the influence of the problem.

Michael White developed a 'conversational map' to assist therapists externalize problems. It is called the 'statement of position map' because it enables people to take a position in relation to the problem. This 'map' consists of four parts:

1. Naming the problem

The therapist works with the person to negotiate an experience-near and particular description of the problem. This definition is in the person'sown words.

Exploring the effects and consequences of the problem

The therapist asks questions to hear about the effects and consequences that the problem has had on various aspects of the person's life and their relationships.

3. Evaluating the effects of the problem

The therapist invites the person to take a position in relation to the problem. Is this problem positive or negative, or a mixture, in their lives?

4. Justifying the Evaluation

The therapist ask this person to explain or justify their evaluation – why is the problem positive or negative? This enables the person to begin to speak about their values, beliefs, hopes, dreams, principles and purposes.

There are many different ways that therapists engage in externalising conversations, and many different ways of using this map. We have included here an example from the work of Sahar Mohammad, with a young woman, Ghadeer.

Ghadeer: Externalising 'the pain and separation'

Ghadeer Nazaal is 23 years old and lives near Jenin in Palestine. She is not married and is studying at Jerusalem University. She lives in her family owned house. She has three brothers and four sisters, she is the fourth child in the family. When Ghadeer was 17 she suffered from the shock of losing her mother who was battling with liver cancer for many years. Two years later, she was subject to psychological trauma when the occupation forces killed her brother, Mahmud, who was 21 years old. When Ghadeer first attended counselling she was 21 and felt 'there is nothing in the world that is worth living for'.

A psychiatrist had diagnosed Ghadeer with 'mood disorder – recurrent depression', and psychological tests had shown she was suffering from 'moderate to severe depression'.

The following transcript is from a conversation with narrative therapist Sahar Mohammad.

Can you please tell me why you have come to speak with me at this time?

I am continuously thinking of my martyr brother and my mother. I am nervous and feeling empty. I feel there is nothing in the world that is worth living for.

The sadness is so deep and I have a longing to be with my lost ones and to live with their memories. I am always living in the past and this hurts me as I am not satisfied. I feel only what is missing in my life with no one to compensate for the loss of my brother. No one can replace him.

If you were to give this problem a name, what would it be?

Pain and separation.

Can you tell me more about the circumstances that affect this 'pain and separation'?

Sometimes I go through a situation which would have been pleasant while my brother was with me, but when I go through the same situation now, after his loss, it is different. For example, when I meet Mahmud's friend and talk to him as I did when my brother was with me, this no longer has the same feeling. Now it has become formal.

What increases the intensity of the problem?

The financial situation of course, with Mahmud I could do as I wished, but now I do not want to ask anyone, not even my father.

To what extent does the 'pain and separation' affect your relationships with others?

I try not to get attached to anyone and not to love them fearing that I will lose them. I cannot get along well with others. They say I am complicated, others do not care, only they reproach and blame.

To what extent does the problem affect your perceptions of yourself?

I feel I bring bad luck to others. I get close to someone and something bad happens.

To what extent has the problem affected your hopes?

My mother and my brother both wanted me to continue my university education and to graduate from university with my siblings. This motivates me to study.

What do you think about the effects of this problem in your life, are they good or bad?

Sometimes the pain and separation is very bad as it demolishes us. Thinking about my brother, however, has positive effects sometimes as it motivates me to study, to improve my life. I want to change my personality and to accept everyone like my brother used to do.

Narrative therapy is very interested in the themes or storylines of people's lives. In this conversation, Ghadeer came to name the problem she was facing. She did not call this 'mood disorder' or 'depression'. She called it 'pain and separation'. This is the externalised definition of the problem. This is one theme or storyline of her life. The therapist then asked her about the effects of this problem in her life and in her relationships. When the therapist asked about how the problem is affecting her hopes, a second theme started to emerge in relation to Ghadeer wanting to study and improve her life. This can be seen as the opening to a second theme or second storyline. We will return to this example again later in the handbook.

When working with children, it is sometimes helpful to ask them to externalise the problem through drawing. The following picture was drawn by 11-year-old Merriam (not her real name) during her narrative therapy sessions with Nihaya Abu-Rayvan.



Merriam is living in a village east of Hebron which is regularly exposed to harassments from Occupation forces & settlers. On the left hand side of this drawing is a sketch of the externalised 'Fear'. Merriam described that: 'This Fear is disturbing me. It deprives me of happiness. It scares me. He wants to make me moody and not do my homework. It makes me lazy in the school and unhappy with my life.' Merriam also described that the Fear was causing her to have nightmares and not to be able to sleep at night.

When Nihaya asked Merriam about some of the ways in which Merriam tried to lessen the influence of the Fear in her life, she replied:

'I keep the room light on, try to be close to my brothers or go to my Mum room to sleep beside her. When this Fear increases his night visits to me and my heart starts to beat rapidly, sometimes I run away quickly from him to my uncle's wife Jameela. Honestly, I try to resist him (The Fear). I start thinking of beautiful things to make the 'Fear' go far away from me.

Can you tell me what are these beautiful things are that help you to be far away from Fear?

'Something like, "I will pass the school exams". Or I say to the Fear, "I am stronger than you". Watching TV cartoon films has helped too.'

How?

'I learned from the cartoon Three Spies how to resist and defend myself. Also, when I watch Tom & Jerry I start to feel in some moments that the Fear does not exist. In that moment I feel that I am a strong girl, stronger than the Fear.

On the right hand side of her drawing, Merriam has depicted a 'Heroine Merriam'.

Re-authoring Lives – seeking out alternative stories

Narrative therapy involves 're-authoring lives' – seeking out and co-creating alternative storylines of identity. No matter how powerful, or unjust, or overwhelming a situation is, the people with whom we meet will always be responding and resisting in some way. Palestinian people know this better than most. These responses or resistances may be barely visible, but there will be small examples of times when they have been holding onto what is important to them despite the injustice, trauma and/or human rights violations.

It is our job to notice these small examples. Within narrative practice these are called 'unique outcomes' or 'sparkling moments'. These are times that contradict the problem. It is our job to then find ways to weave these 'unique outcomes' into alternative storylines. Re-authoring conversations invite people to tell us more about neglected, overshadowed but potentially significant events in their lives. As Khader Rasras explains:

'It can be meaningful to draw attention to the small ways in which people may be reclaiming their lives. They may be caring for other members of their family, or demonstrating small acts of self-care. I try to enable people to talk about their experiences, to pinpoint the things that they have done, the ways they have struggled to survive. Together we try to create a story of them as active survivors rather than as passive victims.'

Landscape of action and landscape of intention

During re-authoring conversations, narrative therapists re-author a preferred storyline. This preferred storyline involves two different landscapes: a 'landscape of action' and a 'landscape of identity'. The landscape of action consists of:

- the preferred actions that a person has taken
- these occur across time and can be linked together into a plot

Stories consist of a series of events that occur over timeand are connected by a plot or a theme. Within re-authoring conversations we are interested in exploring events that occur in the:

Distant Past --- Recent Past --- Current Time --- Near Future --- Far Future

Questions narrative therapists ask about the landscape of action include:

- What did you actually do, tell me more?
- Where were you when this happened?
- Did you do something earlier to prepare yourself to take this step?
- Was anyone else involved?
- Who else might know that you did this?
 The landscape of identity consists of why people do what they do, and how people's actions reflect

do what they do, and how people's actions reflect on their identity. We are interested in hearing about what is important to people, how people are choosing to be in the world, and about their preferred identities. So we explore people's:

- Intentions
- Purposes
- Values
- Beliefs
- Hopes
- Dreams
- Commitments

Questions narrative therapists ask about the 'landscape of intention'include:

- In taking this step, in doing this action, was it important to you?
- What might this say about what you were valuing?
- What purpose do you want to put this to?
- What does this say about what you believe in generally?
- The fact that you were able to do this, what does it say about you?

In therapy conversations there can be a number of starting points for re-authoring conversations. We might start with:

a 'unique outcome' or 'sparkling moment'
 a time when the problem has not been present, or has been less influential.

- something that the person has done recently about which they are happy, some contribution they are making to the lives of others (even if it is small),
- or a value, something that the person gives value to, something the person cares about.

Sometimes, when people are experiencing profound hardship, it can be very difficult to learn about what it is they give value to. In these circumstances, we look for what is called 'the absent but implicit'. In the very expression of distress there are hints to what the person gives value to. For instance, if a person is expressing 'shame and indignity', then perhaps the person is seeking a sense of dignity a sense of pride. Perhaps 'pride and dignity' is important to the person. We can seek the value that is implicit in a person's distress.

Once we have found a 'unique outcome' or 'sparkling moment', or have identified what it is that the person gives value to, we then move backwards and forwards between the landscape of action and landscape of intention. This process creates preferred storylines of identity.

To illustrate this, let's return to the conversation with Ghadeer.

A re-authoring conversation with Ghadeer

You mentioned to me that you were pleased about something today. Please can you tell me about this?

Today I encouraged my sisters, Fayhaa and Dalaal, to go on a school excursion to Ariha and Hadad.

Can you tell us more about this experience? Where were you when this happened? Who was there? What role did they play?

I was at home when I asked them to go. They were scared that I would not allow them to go due to the 'pain and separation' which often makes me worried that something might happen to them.

Can you describe with more details what you did?

I encouraged them to participate in the

school excursion and to enjoy it like all other school girls.

What did you do to get ready for the situation?

I made sure they will go and enjoy the excursion and I prepared them cake and other food and pocket money so they would enjoy it.

Do you recall whether you have done this sort of thing before?

Yes I have always made sure they had what they wanted. Before I was not always satisfied with my efforts but today I feel satisfied. I gave them food, clothes, money and study.

For a long time I have been trying to continue with life. I remember going to my cousin's wedding eight months after my mother's death. We did participate in the celebration but I was sad inside while everyone else was happy. I was looking for my mother and brother.

When you recall your actions today and your efforts in the past, what do you call what you did?

Despite the shocks and everything, life has to continue and it continues.

Could you tell us about your intentions when you gave your sisters permission to go on the school excursion?

I want to get over the obstacle made by the 'pain and separation', to break it and get over the sadness.

Can you tell me why this is important to you?

It is important to change the mood around us. There has been enough sadness as we are still in our young years. We have many years ahead and we must be ready for any shocks that will happen to us.

These intentions to 'get over the obstacles', and to 'change the mood around you', are these linked to beliefs you hold?

Yes. My young siblings have the same rights as other girls to play, to have fun and to be optimistic about life. Also, those who surround us share our sadness and so we must also share their joy. This makes strong family ties.

It sounds like the rights of your sisters are important to you. And that you are committed to your family and contributing to strong family ties. Is this what you are committed to?

I have the responsibility to take care of my siblings. They have been trusted to me and I try to make up for my mother's tenderness. She is not here so I must convey her tenderness.

Going back, can you remember when these commitments first became important to you?

Before my mother passed away and when I was at school, I did not feel the responsibility in the same way, but I did help my mother whenever she asked me. I was living in the present then and I did not think of the future.

Can you tell me a story about something you did in the past that also showed these commitments?

For example, when I returned from school and my mother was not at home, I did the housework and sometimes I would take care of my siblings.

In light of this longer history, if you think about this recent event of letting your sisters go to the excursion ... what do you think?

I do not regret anything I do, but if I could go back I would work every minute.

And if you continue taking the steps that you are describing, what will others notice?

They will notice me doing my best to assume my obligations, my responsibilities. They will see me conveying my mother's tenderness and trying to change the mood around my sisters.

We are about to finish this discussion. Can you think of a description or a theme to describe what you have been talking about?

I can thinkof three themes:

- We live life with all that comes in it the sweet and the bitter.
- We must preserve our dreams and ambitions no matter what happens.
- This is about getting closer to God. The most important thing is to strengthen your relationship with God and you will overcome everything.

This is an example of a re-authoring conversation. Within this conversation, some alternative or preferred stories/themes of Ghadeer's life are starting to emerge. A very small example of Ghadeer 'encouraging her sisters Fayhaa and Dalaal to go on a school excursion' was explored in order to investigate what it is that Ghadeer values in life. When Ghadeer first saw the therapist she said that 'felt 'there is nothing in the world that is worth living for'. Within the two narrative therapy conversations described here, Ghadeer is starting to speak about certain values, beliefs, intentions, responsibilities and commitments that may be worth living for. These values and beliefs are linked to other people in Ghadeer's life. Finding ways to link preferred stories to preferred people will be discussed in the next chapter.

Re-membering conversations – Responding to grief

Once someone begins to speak about what is important to them, the values that have survived the human rights violations, narrative therapists are interested in linking these to special people, special relationships in the person's life. These can be relationships with people who are still alive, or with people who have passed away. In the example included below, Ghadeer is invited into a re-membering conversation about her brother Mahmud. Re-membering conversations are sometimes called 'saying hullo again' conversations, as the person gets a chance to 'say hullo again' to lost loved ones.

Re-membering conversations consist of four parts:

- The therapist invites Ghadeer to speak about the contributions that Mahmud made to Ghadeer's life.
 - What was it that Mahmud contributed to your life?
 - What did you learn from Mahmud?
 - What difference has this made to your life?
- 2. The therapist invites Ghadeer to see herself and her actions through the loving eyes of Mahmud
 - What do you think Mahmud saw in you?
 - · What did Mahmud know about you?

- What do you think Mahmud appreciated about you?
- If Mahmud were here right now, what might he or she want to tell me about you and the efforts you are making now?
- 3. The therapist invites Ghadeer to consider what she may have contributed to Mahmud's life.
 - Can you imagine what it might have been like for Mahmud to know you?
 - What do you think it meant to Mahmud to have you in his life?
 - Do you think there may have been some way that you contributed to Mahmud's life?
- 4. Contributions to Mahmud's identity
 - Do you think your presence in Mahmud's life helped reinforce any of his particular values or hopes for his life?
 - What might Mahmud possibly say about the ways in which you contributed to his life, to who he was as a person, to what his life was about?

Ghadeer re-membering Mahmud

To demonstrate a re-membering conversation, we will now return to the conversation with Ghadeer.

Ghadeer, as you speak about these three themes – 'We live life with all what comes in it – the sweet and the bitter'; 'We must preserve our dreams and ambitions no matter what happens'; and 'This is about getting closer to God' – who in your life would be least surprised to hear you speaking about these matters? This person could be alive or deceased. Who would most appreciate what you have been saying today?

My brother Mahmud.

How did Mahmud contribute to your life?

He was an inspiration to me in the way he acted and in the way he treated us and the family. We learned from him how to live our life especially during shocking events. For instance, when the army invaded the refugee camp he supported us all despite everything

that happened and he was appealing to God.

Can you tell me something that Mahmud introduced to your life?

He introduced me to a belief in myself. And he made it possible for me to be responsible even though I am young. This was especially true when my mother passed away. I was only 17 years old and together we rose to the occasion because we behaved like Mahmud.

What was most significant about him to you?

Because he was the oldest among us, when my mother passed away we were very close together. He made up for my mother's tenderness. We made up for our mother's tenderness between each other. He also behaved well and I liked to imitate him.

How was your life affected by Mahmud?

When he was alive he trusted me with many things and made me feel confident and important and I was very happy. During his loss I was very annoyed and the situation changed: the pain and the separation took over my life. But I like the way Mahmud lived his life.

What do you think Mahmud valued about you as his sister?

After our mother died, I assumed responsibility and became like the mother in our house. I took care of him and provided him with security.

Was there anything that Mahmud found in you that others might not be able to see?

Mahmud knew I had courage. I had courage to deal with the difficult situations we've been through. I did prove I was able to endure especially when they detained two of my brothers and I was staying at home without being scared. Thanks to God I have overcome all of this.

So what is it that you think Mahmud valued about you ... what made you a valuable part of his life?

My ability to act in difficult situations.

Were there specificthings, specific times when you and Mahmud were significant to each other?

During my mother's illness, we compensated for her tenderness. We took her together to the hospital. After her death we would also study together ...

If you could see yourself through Mahmud's eyes, what would he most appreciate about you?

That we took up our responsibilities in situations bigger than us. I remember he asked me to take care of my siblings.

So he would appreciate that you are taking care of your sisters, that you are trying to change the mood around them, that you are trying to overcome the 'pain and separation'?

Yes, I think he would be proud of this.

In reviewing your thoughts, how was Mahmud's life different because you were in it? Were you responsive to him?

Yes I was responsive to him. I did do the things that he liked, for example I invited his friends for Ramadan. And together we overcame the loss of our mother. The mother is everything in this world. She was not an ordinary person. She was very dear inside the house and outside. And because I was Mahmud's older sister, I took mother's place when she died. I did everything I could to compensate for her financial, psychological and emotional support. I cared for and educated my younger siblings, make sure they do not need anything, I do the housework, take care of the garden, and I do private tutoring to save money.

What did all these actions make possible for Mahmud?

It made it possible for him to feel secure and to go ahead in his work and his life. When a human being finds who to trust, he becomes able to better assume his responsibilities. And Mahmud could trust me.

I can only say that we complemented each other. In bearing the responsibility of our female siblings, when he was there he did what I could not do, and I did what he could not do.

Do you think Mahmud's personality was in anyway different through his relationship with you?

Perhaps he became more patient and accepting.

Does it make a difference to think about Mahmud in these ways?

The martyrdom of my brother Mahmud is the most difficult experience I have ever gone through in my life. At the beginning, I felt I had completely collapsed because I relied on him and he had gone forever. But after thinking about what Mahmudhoped for in his life, what he wished for, and what we became together, his memory is like a moving force for me. It is pushing me forward in life. It is making me stronger.

What do you think will become possible in the future if you remember your relationship with your brother?

In my view, I have been through the most difficult problem in my life when Mahmud became a martyr. Now I am going to continue his dream by completing my studies at university andby taking care of my siblings.

Would you like to add anything before we finish?

What hits us and does not kill us makes us stronger and courageous.

Within this conversation, Ghadeer's commitments to study and to care for her siblings become intertwined with the storyline of her relationship with her brother, Mahmud, The two-way nature of this relationship became richly described and Ghadeer explains how, through these conversations, Mahmud's memory becomes 'like a moving force ... It is pushing me forward into life'. This is one of the aims of re-membering conversations. The preferred story of Ghadeer's life is now linked more strongly to the legacies of her brother. Another way in which we can link people's lives around preferred themes involves the use of 'outsider witnesses'. This form of narrative practice is discussed in the next chapter.

Before proceeding to outsider-witness practice, we will include here two further short stories about re-membering conversations.

Re-membering conversations

BY MARYAM BURQAN

I was recently working with a woman whose husband died five years ago. She was living alone with her nine-year-old daughter and was having some troubles in relation to her husband's family. They wanted her to move in with them. They believed her daughter should be raised by her husband's family rather than her alone. Our conversations focused on the ways in which she was keeping her husband's presence alive in her life.

Through asking her a range of questions, I learnt that her husband's clothes and pictures were all arranged within her family home in ways to preserve his memory. His favourite belt was hung in a particular place where she could see it from her bed. She told me: 'My husband is inside me now. He is in our home. He is here.' She described that when other difficulties in her life were strong, she could still confide in her husband.

I was interested in asking questions according to the re-membering conversations map, to gather richer descriptions about the contributions that the husband had made to her life, and the contributions that she had made to his life. I wanted to hear about a two-way account of this relationship as I thought this would assist to sustain her during these difficult times.

I heard that he had been a very understanding husband. Whenever there were difficult situations, he would comfort her. He encouraged her initiatives and he was very tender towards her in all aspects of life. I then asked her about the contributions she made to her husband's life. She spoke about how she would wash his clothes, cook for him and take care of the house. She also described how she would talk to him about love, and helped

him to understand many things about relationships. She knew that his life with her had been a beautiful life, that he had been very happy with her.

Honouring this two-way relationship was significant to her. She described that she thought he was in another world now, one in which he looked down at her, and saw her remembering him. She said that this made him happy and, in turn, this was significant to her.

Re-membering conversations with children

Re-membering conversations can also be significant for children. Here is a story from a Palestinian family in the Gaza strip, told by Sue Mitchell. Through re-membering conversations, Tarek was able to remember some things he had forgotten about himself with the assistance of his cherished uncle Ab.

Tarek's mum, Amina, had invited me to meet with her and Tarek because of concerns about Tarek's isolation from his siblings and other children, his poor school performance and in particular, nightly bedwetting. I asked Tarek what he thought about his mum's concerns and told me, very quietly, that things were not right for him. He told me that he was teased by his older siblings and other children for wetting the bed, and for being small and weak (he was smaller than average for his age). He told me thev called him names. Because of this, he didn't like going to school and found it difficult to concentrate when he was there. One of the things that distressed him most he said, was that he wasn't able to go to the Mosque on account of being 'unclean'. His mother complained of the constant washing of bed sheets. The mattress he slept on was ruined and smelled bad. The family had a very small income and replacing the mattress was difficult. Amina said it was difficult to provide enough food, which was the priority. Tarek told me he felt lonely, that he was causing his mum lots of trouble, and that there was something wrong with him. I asked Tarek if there was anyone he could think of in his life who might know another story about him. Tarek thought for a while and then mentioned his uncle Ab who used to live upstairs from Tarek. Living in a place of armed conflict, Ab had been shot by sniper fire while standing by his living room window. Ab's body had been carried down the cement stairs and Tarek had been given the job of cleaning the

blood from the stairs. He spoke of the image of his uncle's blood on the stairs and how difficult it was to remove the blood. As he spoke tears fell from his eyes.

I asked him about Ab, what kind of relationship he shared with Tarek. Tarek said that they were very close. He said that he loved his uncle dearly and that his uncle really 'understood him'. I asked some more questions about Ab and what he contributed to Tarek's life. Tarek said that Ab always had time for him, that when he came to visit he would sit Tarek on his lap and talk with him. Tarek said that Ab made him feel special. Now that Ab was gone there was no-one who made him feel this way. I asked Tarek what Ab might want to tell me about Tarek, if it were possible to ask. This was difficult for Tarek to answer but he said that he would say good things about Tarek, that he was responsible and kind. And also that he was funny. These were very different understandings of Tarek than those most dominantly available to him now. We spoke some more about why Ab would say that Tarek was responsible and kind and funny. I was trying to get as many examples of these ideas of Tarek as possible. I then asked Tarek what he thought he might have meant to his uncle. Tarek said he hadn't thought about this before but, in thinking about it, he thought that he was probably important to his uncle. His uncle didn't have any sons and seemed to enjoy spending time with Tarek. I asked whether their relationship might have taught something to Ab, about what kind of man he was. Tarek thought that their relationship might have taught Ab that he would be a good father to a son, or that he was a good uncle to his nephew. Tarek usually sat with his shoulders slumped and his face turned to the ground. But as he spoke of these things he sat more upright and began to look me in the face. I asked him what it was like to be talking about this and it said that it made him feel 'safe'.

I asked him what his uncle might say to him, if he were able to speak directly to him. Tarek said he didn't know but he agreed to think about it.

When we returned the following week, Tarek met us at the door with his mother close behind. Amina was smiling and said that Tarek had some good news for us. Once we sat down Tarek told us, smiling but with humility, that he had been to the Mosque that week. He had been waking in the morning after not wetting the bed at all. I asked Tarek what he thought had contributed to this development. He said that at night, before going to sleep, he had been having small conversations in his mind with his uncle. He would say goodnight to Ab and listen for Ab's words in return. He said these words he heard in his mind were comforting and helped him feel safe.

Outsider-witness practice – finding a supportive audience

Another key narrative therapy practice involves the use of 'outsider witnesses'. Outsider witnesses are supportive people who are invited to act as an audience to the preferred stories of people's lives. These may be family members, friends, colleagues or therapists. The counsellor interviews the outsider witness using the follow questions:

1. The expression

- As you listened to Ghadeer, what did you hear that stood out for you, or that struck a chord with you, or that you were drawn to?
- What were the particular words or expressions that caught your attention?

1. The image

- What did the story suggest to you about what might be important to Ghadeer, or what they stand for in life?
- What image did this evoke for you?

2. Resonance

 You have spoken about what stood out for you in hearing Ghadeer's story. What is it about your own life/work that has you being drawn to these expressions?

3. Transport

Where do you think this conversation has taken you?

- What might be more possible as a result of hearing Ghadeer's story?
- What aspects of Ghadeer's story would you like to stay with you?

The therapist then turns to the client (Ghadeer) and asks her what it was like to listen to the outsider witness, what difference this will make in her life.

When the therapist asked Ghadeer who she would like to have join them in on the next therapy session, she chose to invite Raina, her younger sister.

The questions were addressed to Raina while Ghadeerwas listening:

As you were listening to Ghadeer's, what were you attracted to in her story?

Our sister has always convinced us to look to our life with pride. I know that my sister tries to hide her tears from us. She acts in simplicity to hold herself together for us.

Did a picture of your sister come to your mind as you listened?

I see my sister continuing her studies despite her experience. She challenged everything and she has good marks.

Did the story you have just heard mean anything important for you?

Her story reminds me that it is true we have lost, but hearing her makes me feel the loss less strongly.

From hearing the details of the story what are you going to keep? What has become important for you in life?

Listening to my sister, I wish to take responsibility of what happens to me.

The therapist then asked Ghadeer what it was like to listen to Raina's reflections.

You had the opportunity to hear your sister's words, what was this like for you?

Thanks to God when someone hears about what he does, and the result of his work, and what I do for them. Up til now, it was difficult to understand their feelings about me but I do know now.

In hearing your sister, what things did you

notice that affected you?

She feels what is inside me, what I am trying to hide. She knows I am acting in simplicity to hold myself together despite the difficult situations. And what she learns from me ...

What were the most important things you heard?

She believes what I said and she will continue her studies. Education is everything.

In thinking about this, what might happen in your life together?

God permitting, we will have new dreams. When someone has a shock, they can lose their dreams and hopes and faith in life. Then they stand up on their own feet again. Life continues and new hopes will come.

What do you take from today?

Thanks to God my life journey is correct. I will keep going without fear or hesitation.

Here Sahar Muhammad reflects on her work with Ghadeer:

Through our conversations, Ghadeer was able to move from a river of sadness and separation to the safety of a riverbank – a secure place of identity. From the safety of this riverbank, she could look from a distance back to the river and think about ways of continuing with her life. Preferred stories brought renewed confidence. Despite difficult life circumstances, Ghadeer was able to re-member her brother and mother with calmness and security. Holding onto them in her memory will benefit her future as she seeks to realize her wishes and dreams, which are hers but are also shared with her mother and brother.

Responding to many losses in Palestine: the hopes and dreams of others are in our hearts

BY NIHAYA ABU-RAYYAN

There is so much grief here in Palestine. We lost our lands and are continuing to lose them. We have lost loved ones through normal deaths and national deaths. We have lost people into prison, and prisoners and ex-prisoners have lost years of their life. Then there are the people in exile, the deportees. And there are people who have lost limbs. And so on. As narrative therapists, we are therefore so often responding to people in grief. There are different ways that we try to assist them.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF RESPONDING TO PEOPLE IN GRIEF:

- We try to offer comfort through sharing grief, so that people do not remain alone in suffering.
- We participate in broader cultural practices of grieving – visiting, standing with each other, religious and cultural forms of remembrance, wearing black, not changing clothes for 40 days, and so on.
- We acknowledge that there is a diversity of ways of grieving. We create space for people to talk about some of the cultural practices that are not helpful to them and work together to find other ways that do fit with the person.
- We externalise grief. It can sometimes be significant to assist people to come up with words to express and share experiences. This can include poetic descriptions of grief. Poetry is significant in Arabic culture. Sometimes sharing grief requires poetic descriptions of sorrow.
- We draw out and richly story a person's responses to grief, their skills and knowledges of enduring losses.
- We find ways for a person who is grieving to share their skills, knowledges, and stories about responding to grief, with others who are also suffering. In this way they experience making a contribution to another person.
- We create documents for people about their experiences and their skills of survival.

- We engage in re-membering and 'saying hullo again' conversations about the lost loved one.
- We make it possible for the person who is grieving to see how they can continue to make a contribution to the person who has died. This might be through assisting the dead person's family, by writing letters to the person's family, or by finding ways that they can shape their life as continuing the projects that they were joined in with the person.
- Significantly, we also weave legacies. We make it possible for the person who is grieving to see how they can carry on the values of the lost loved one. This is like creating a line between the living and the dead. We can continue life without forgetting the past, without forgetting our dearest people. We hold them in our hearts. In fact, the hopes and dreams of others are in our hearts.

Documenting and sharing people's skills and knowledge

Within narrative therapy, in addition to having counselling conversations, we use skills of the written word. We request permission from those with whom we are meeting to take some notes while we are speaking. During the therapy session, we then carefully write down some of the person's exact words and phrases. At appropriate times during the session, and sometimes at the end of the meeting, we read back these notes to the person concerned to check that we have recorded them accurately. We don't write down our words, summaries or interpretations. We write down the person's exact words. These notes are therefore a valuable record of the person's own descriptions of what they are experiencing.

As narrative therapy conversations progress, it becomes possible to then write a letter back to the person, or to create certificates or documents out of the person's own words. Within these letters, certificates or documents we include the special skills that people are using to address the problems they are facing. For instance, when working with children, sometimes certificates are made and awarded that celebrate the child's

efforts at 'Escaping from fear' or 'Shrinking the naughty monster'. Here is a certificate that was awarded to Razan (not her real name), a child from Hebron's old city:





Razan was a member of a children's group all of whom had been suffering from the effects of daily attacks and violations on their lives by settlers. This certificate acknowledges what is important to Razan: the love of others, her pride in her

family, and her aspirations for success and excellence. It has names the important people in her life, her mother & father. In addition, her hopes & dreams are listed: to continue her studies to become an astrophysicist, and to see all the children smile and be overwhelmed with happiness. The certificate also includes a short message to her cousin who has helped her to overcome difficult times: 'Thank you my cousin for your support and everything you did for me in the harsh moments I passed through'.

Sometimes the documents that are created can then be shared with other people who are going through similar problems. We also ask permission for this first. We also sometimes change people's names to ensure confidentiality.

We have included here an example of such a document from work with children and an example from work with a mother whose husband is detained.

The first example is a document of children's skills in Gaza about their skills and knowledge in relation to managing the effects of a military attack. It was written by narrative therapist, Sue Mitchell (2005).

How to manage the effects of a military attack: Tips for children from the children of the Aidini family

DURING THE ATTACK

- It's important to support each other, to catch each other. Look at each other's faces, if you see thatsomeone is distressed, talk to him or her.
- Keep your mind on the future, imagine the day when you'll be safe again.
- If you have no food, remember Ramadan. It is possible to go for long periods without any food or drink.
- Practise patience.

AFTER THE ATTACK

- Make sure you have times to be together and laugh.
- Talk together.
- Invent games that make you laugh and help you breathe.
- Keep studying this is a good way to fight.
- Practise patience patience is the key to wellbeing.
- Care for each other. Invite kids who are suffering to play with you.
- Eat olives the olive tree is the tree of peace.

Here is a document from the words of a man recently released from prison.

Heckmut's list of prison skills

Heckmut is 27 years old and has spent about 5 years in prison. He has been free for 4 months.

Coming out of prison is difficult. It brings difficulties for the future concerning - work, getting married and having a family. Sometimes people feel after being in prison that they have fallen behind other men their age and this can lead to having a 'bad sense of yourself'.

While Heckmut was in prison there were particular skills that he used to get through the difficult times. This is Heckmut's list of prison skills:

- 1. My time in prison taught me to be patient. I used skills of patience while I was inside.
- I learned to be strong while living in a very bad situation. I was very good at being strong while in prison.
- I developed friendships in prison. I used skills in friendship.
- 4. I received good training in Palestine's history and politics.
- I learned through the hardship of prison that I wanted to change my life to have a better life.

These are five signs of strength and power in Heckmut's life.

Here is a document created from a mother's words in Nablus who was consulting Sawsan Tabanja.

Skills in keeping a family connected while your husband is in prison

Many Palestinian women have had to find ways to care for their families and stay connected to their husbands while their husbands are in prison. This document has been created to share some of this special knowledge of Palestinian women.

It has been created from a conversation with Nihad who lives in Nablus. Nihad's husband has spent the last 9 years in prison. He was shot at the time of his arrest and severely wounded and is continuing to recover. Nihad was married at 15 years of age and has 5 children (3 boys and 2 older girls). When Nihad's husband was first imprisoned this was a very difficult time for her. She was sad and angry. She had lost hope, was not sleeping, she was neglecting herself and she also had troubles raising her children.

Over the last nine years, Nihad, her husband and their children, have found many ways to deal with this very difficult situation. Here are some ways in which they have remained connected despite the prison's ongoing attempts to disconnect the family and keep the father isolated.

LETTERS

During his first fouryears of detainment no one in the family was allowed to visit my husband. So we had to keep our connection through sending letters back and forth. Sometimes it took the letters over two months to get to me even though I was living only a few hundred kilometres away from the prison. During these four years, I would wait patiently for the letters to arrive and share them with my family and children. These letters made everyone feel better.

SENDING PICTURES

After the first year my husband asked me to send pictures of our children to the prison every seven months so he could track their 'growing up'.

TO THINK OF HIM

During those years I would think of him all the time.

VISITS

After four years, it then became possible to visit. I have only been allowed one visit every 1.5 years. however, the children are allowed to go and visit their father more regularly. To make the visit to the prison the children meet the Red Cross bus at 4am. They are then driven to the prison alongside other Red Cross buses packed with prisoners' family members. The prison guards allow only a few families at a time into the prison for visits, so the children are made to wait hours on the bus until all families returned from their personal visits - before returning home on the bus. The trips take14-20 hours. Sometimes, during the cold winter months, the children would often return home sick from these trips and they have to miss some days of school. But year after year they have kept up their monthly visits to see and connect with their father.

MY HUSBAND'S ACTIONS

After some time, my husband told the children not to visit quite so often, because he could tell how demanding this was for them. So now they visit less often but still very regularly. My husband also gave his support for me to talk with a counsellor. He placed more trust in me which made my life in the community a little easier.

TELLING STORIES

After each visit, my daughters come back and tell me stories about my husband. They talk non-stop about their father to me and other family members for 3-4 days. These stories help us to stay connected. I am very happy my daughters are so happy to see and talk about their father.

GIFTS FROM THE PRISON

Recently, my husband sent gifts home for me, our daughters and sons. These presents are intricately beaded bracelets with our names on them that my husband has made in prison. He has also sent us presents that other prisoners have made.

ILLEGAL PHONE CALLS

These days, one of the most exciting ways of staying connected is that I sometimes talk with my husband on a mobile phone that was smuggled into the prison! After these phone calls I have a very big smile on my face.

THE VALUE OF PATIENCE IN HARD TIMES

Looking back, throughout these nine years the value of patience has been important. I have learnt this value in waiting for my husband. I notice many people who have it much worse than me – some of their husbands have been killed or have longer sentences. When I think of them, I feel I can do this.

THE HELP OF MY DAUGHTERS

Sometimes, when my daughters know I don't feel good, they are quiet and they help me at home.

THE HELP OF A COUNSELLOR

Before my counsellor came I had anger and sadness and many problems. I did not know how to deal with my teenage daughters. She helped me with the grief, the sadness and the anger. She helps me to speak with my children with much less anger.

PRIDE

My ten-year-old son goes to a special school. We pay extra for this and he is now getting top marks.

To celebrate this I hosted a little party for him and bought candy for everyone. I studied teaching and worked as a school teacher for two years. It seems now that this hard work wasn't for nothing. My husband is proud of both me and my son.

LOOKING FORWARDS WITH ANTICIPATION

I'm beginning to feel better now after many, many years of not feeling good. I am calmer and less worried. Some days I even feel like I did before he went to prison. We were together for ten years before he was arrested. Life here teaches us to be strong – it is like a difficult school.

Throughout these years, we have always looked forward to new visits and new stories to be told. My husband is going to return home in 14 months. We are now preparing for his return and anticipating this reunion.

I used to be a teacher. I now hope that what our family has learnt about staying connected while my husband has been in prison may be able to help other Palestinian women and families. This is a different sort of teaching.

This process of documenting people's skills and knowledges helps people to realise their own special ways of dealing with hardships. Within narrative therapy, people often say that receiving one of these letters or documents is worth 4 or 5 sessions of therapy! It is also possible to convene rituals or ceremonies in which these documents are read aloud in front of supportive friends, family or other workers. These ceremonies can further contribute to people developing a renewed sense of identity.

Rites of passage and the migration of identity

A further key concept of narrative practice involves rites of passage and the migration of identity. These concepts are beautifully described by Nihaya Mahmud Abu-Rayyan in her paper, 'The Seasons of Life: Ex-detainees reclaiming their lives' (2009).

The seasons of life: ex-detainees reclaiming their lives

NIHAYA MAHMUD ABU-RAYYAN

In all of our lives, we move through different rites of passage; for instance from being a child to an adult. As we live life on one stage, we face particular changes and challenges and we develop our own expertise. All that we learn on one stage of life affects who we are and how we relate to those we know. When the time comes to separate from one way of living and to move to another, these are moments of enormous challenge. Everything that is familiar and comfortable on the first stage is no longer. We are forced to face changes and new struggles. Life doesn't always provide us with choices. Sometimes we are placed in situations beyond our control and it is then that we must find ways to live and to protect our sense of self from being demolished.

When we move from one stage of life to another, it can make all the difference if we use the expertise we developed on the first stage in order to face the difficult situations of the next. All that

we learnt in autumn can assist us to deal with winter. All that we learnt during winter can help us throughout spring. And all that we learnt in spring can provide comfort during summer, and so on.

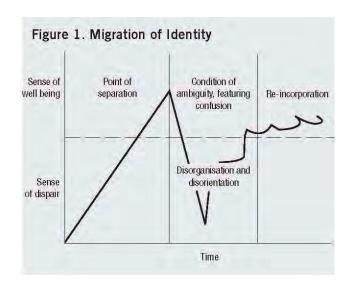
Only when there is this sense of continuity can we look forward to life. And as the seasons cycle, we can then remember what we have passed through, how we have changed, and how we have remained the same.

While meeting with ex-prisoners, the metaphor of the seasons of life provides continuity for those who have been through great hardship. It provides a chance for them to speak about the different stages or seasons that they have passed through and how what they learnt in oneseason can assist them in another. Significantly, this provides for conversations of pride, not shame.

We speak about the tough experiences and their profound struggles and also about their achievements and what they learned about life through time in prison. Importantly, we talk about the abilities and skills they developed in dealingwith life in prison and how such approaches are able to assist them in their lives now. Often the person has not been conscious or aware of these abilities until our conversations. By finding ways to have these conversations we can build a sense of continuity between how they dealt with life in prisonand how they might live their lives now. More significantly, by having conversations of pride about prison experiences, we can also contribute to re-building a sense of self that has often sufferedterribly.

A migration of identity

This 'seasons of life' approach is based upon the concept of 'the migration of identity' (White, 1995). When any person undergoes a significant 'migration', this involves a 'rite of passage'. And within any rite of passage there are three phases: life before the point of separation; the 'liminal' stage, characterised by a condition of ambiguity, confusion, and disorientation; and the reincorporation stage (Turner, 1969). When charted visually, these three stages on the horizontal axis can be plotted against degrees of a sense of despair or a sense of wellbeing on the vertical axis, as shown in Figure 1.



'Four seasons' of prison experience.

As ex-detainees' experience can be seen asconsisting of four stages, we can relate these stages

to the four seasons:

- 1. Arrest and detention stage (autumn)
- 2. Investigation stage/ isolation and interrogation (winter)
- 3. Prison stage (spring)
- 4. After release (summer)

During conversations about the migration ofidentity, we focus on the small details of actions the

person took in order to adapt and endure their life circumstances during each 'season'. Even if they were living in a very small and unhealthy place whichconsists only of a blanket that is tough and worn, and has the toilet in the same cell room; even if itis a dark room, with a bad smell, and wet and mouldy walls, the person will be doing many things to survive, to resist despair and hopelessness, andto prevent themselves from succumbing to death. We explore the small details of these actions of self-preservationand discuss their meaning.

Here is an example of one prisoner's actions of survival during the investigation period.

The Insect Story – Namousah

Ahmad is fourty-nine years old. He was in prison in Israel and in Jordan. He first

experienced detention when he was thirteen vears old. The next time he was imprisoned he was twenty and he experienced solitary confinement for nine months and thirteen days continuously. This was the investigation period. During these nine months, he was under the pressure of investigation. When he was in the cell there was no light, nothing to use. He didn't know what time it was. It was a very unhealthy room with insects. There is a particularsort of insect that Palestinian people call Namousah which makes a 'zzzzz' sound. During solitary confinement, Ahmad would hear this sound but he couldn't see where the insect was because the cell was so dark and the insect was also a dark colour. Ahmad would just listen to Namousah's voice going 'zzzzzzzz'.

All the time, Ahmad was thinking, 'how can I catch this insect?' During the investigations, when he was being interrogated, Ahmad would focus his mind on Namousah. He focused on the insect rather than on the investigation. When he would get back to his cell, he would talk with Namousah: 'Where are you? What do you need from me? Why do you do this to me? Can we be friends?'

Ahmad is a writer but he didn't have any papers or pens when he was in prison. Throughout his time in this cell he would memorise the words that he needed to express the story of his relationship with this insect. At the end of his time in prison, he still wasn't able to catch Namousah, but he put it in his mind that he would capture it the next time he was detained. When he was released Ahmad then wrote a story,a novel. Its title is Namousah. He's going to bring this story in to show me one day. For Ahmad, Namousah was his key survival method while in solitary confinement.

Returning to society

Returning to 'society', a major struggle for exdetainees is that they have lived in quite different 'societies': the society before their arrest, the society of those arresting them, the prison society, and society after their release. Having been removed from one society, and then having to adapt to another greatly different one is hard enough. To have to do this over and over is part of the psychological trauma that detainees are exposed to: at each stage, what was known and safe is taken away. Connections are broken. New relationships must be formed. And, while returning to one's family and friends outside is something detainees look forward to, they are also aware that they will be leaving behind some very significant friends – who they may not be able to see for a long time. So, even at the time of release, hidden in the wings of freedom is also some pain.

In our culture, when ex-detainees re-enter their communities, there are a lot of ceremonies, food, and gatherings. This acknowledges not only their freedom, but also what they have stood up for – forthemselves, their families, and other Palestinians. In this way, freedom is like the sun of a new day.

After the release and the ceremonies are over, the ex-detainee faces the world again – but of course, it is a different world, as they themselves are different. The challenges during this time can in some ways be the hardest. Trauma's common aftereffects might be present - fear, flashbacks, physical injuries, and so on. Other unexpected struggles might also appear. For example, after release, some ex-detainees think that many doors will open for them after all that they have been through. However, they then find that they are just one person in a busy world. Alternately, routine tasks can at times seem too difficult or overwhelming – apparently for no reason at all. Not only mightfriends and family ask what is wrong with them, but ex-detainees themselves might think, 'Why am lacting like this? This is not me. I've never done this before', and so on.

All of these struggles and challenges in the exdetainee's life need expertise in order to be dealt with. And this expertise comes from the past. To reconnect with a sense of competence, confidence, and ability, I have conversations with ex-detainees about the skills and knowledges they employed during their incarceration, and how these might be relevant to the challenges they are facing after release.

I also ask questions about the hopes and dreams that carried them through imprisonment, and the hopes and dreams they now hold:

- While you were imprisoned, what were you hoping for, what were you dreaming for?
- Where did these dreams come from?
- Who else was involved in the creation of these dreams?

- How did you hold onto these dreams throughout that time?
- Are those dreams from the past still significant to you?
- What are you hoping for now, what are you dreaming for?
- Where did these hopes and dreams come from?
- Who else was involved in the creation of these dreams?
- How are you managing to hold onto these hopes at this time? What helps to keep these hopes alive?

Friendships

It can be complex to bring together the relationships from inside the prison with those outside. At the time of the detainee's release, she or he promises their friends in prison that they will not forget them, and that they will keep in touch with them. After release, the ex-detainee takes this responsibility of faith on their shoulders and in some ways this means they are not alone. Those within prison remain with them in some way.

And then, when the ex-detainee meets their old friends outside prison, sometimes she or he feels isolated even when sitting with them. Many times ex-detainees feel like strangers from the society. They feel they cannot cope with the outside world or with the ways in which they themselves have changed.

At these times, we return to the past. We explore in conversations how the ex-detainee was able to make relations and friendships with those in prison, even though they had not met before. We explore what skills this involved. And then we discuss how these skills can be used to reintroduce themselves to their old friends and relations. From this viewpoint of revisiting the past, ex-detainees can start to cope with the 'new-old' relations and perhaps can also begin to make new relations in theoutside world. These skills of social relations will be significant because ex-detainees have to adapt to so many changes - changes that have occurred to themselves, changes in their society that have taken place since they were imprisoned, and changes in the lives of those they knew and loved. I try to ask questions that invite the ex-detainee to reconnect with their relations by remembering the ways they made and maintain friendships inside prison:

- Do you have any friends who are still in prison?
- Can you tell me about them?
- How did you make these friendships?
- Are there ways you continue to honour these friendships?
- Do you remember them, stay in touch with them?
- Did you have any friendships or significant relationships before you entered prison?
- Can you tell me more about these friendships?
- How did you make these friendships? What skills did this involve?
- Have any changes happened to these friendships? If so, what are these changes?
- Would any of the ways in which you made friends within prisons, or the ways in which you remember and honour these friendships, be relevant in making or re-making friendships outside prison?

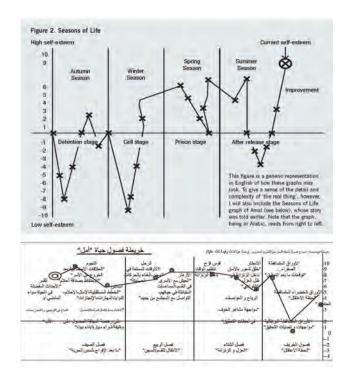
connect them, moving from one side of the page to the other (see Figure 2). When they do this, I have found that the visual sense of progress over time can be powerfully significant. It is as if their past achievements push them further forwards. It's as if aspects of their past endurance provide them with a way to deal with current struggles and difficulties.

I find these charts especially useful when people are in danger of feeling that they're going backwards, or if they have been diagnosed as 'inrelapse' of some kind ... the migration of identity map literally charts the difficult terrain that people face, and shows why it might make sense that they would pause in some places, and even double back at other times. Even when people might 'fall down' while walking up a mountain, this doesn't mean they're back to the very beginning of where they started from, or that the heights they reached are suddenly discounted. At all times, the migration of identity shows that the overall journey is forwards and upwards; it's a chart that does not allow people to experience a sense of failure, which is critical within posttrauma work.

The Seasons of Life graph

I have found it helpful to visually represent exdetainee's journeys through the 'Seasons of Life'. One way of doing so is by using a chart which follows the basic form of the 'migration of identity' chart shown earlier. This chart can be used during therapeutic conversations to illustrate where someone has come from and where they are going, as well as acting as a visual record of the conversations themselves. My experience is that doing this charting makes dealing with life's struggles and difficulties easier.

One option I have used is to review a person's experiences and place dots on the chart to show their different senses of despair and wellbeing over time. At the end of each session, or each part of the Seasons of Life exercise, I ask the participant to rate the degree of their esteem/respect or satisfaction with their life at that time (according to a scale between -10 to 10+). When we place this onto a chart, it might initially look like a random scattering of stars in a night sky. However, towards the end of our conversations, I then invite the person to link these dots, to



FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE: Abu- Rayyan (2009) Seasons of Life: Ex-detainees reclaiming their lives. International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work 2:24-40.





PART THREE:

Collective narrative practice

Narrative practices can also be used with groups and/or entire communities. This section describes a number of collective narrative practices:

- Collective documents
- Tree of Life
- Team of Life
- Kite of Life

Documenting survival skills: Collective documents

When entire communities are enduring hardship and injustice, it can be significant to draw out, richly describe, document and share their skills in survival and resistance. In 2006, times were difficult in Nablus. A group of workers were asked to break into groups of three to respond to the following questions:

- Describe something (a special skill or knowledge of living) that gets you through difficult times
- Tell a story about this about a time when this special skill or knowledge made a difference to you or others
- What is the history of this skill or knowledge?
- How did you learn this?
- Who did you learn it from?

When participants returned to the large group, everyone had a chance to re-tell what they had discussed in the small groups. This was translated (from Arabic to English) and David Denborough took notes which were then written up into the following document.

Dealing with life under occupation: The special skills and knowledges that sustain the workers of Nablus

This document describes what sustains the workers in Nablus in dealing with life under occupation. It is hoped that this document can be shared with others who are living under military rule, both in Palestine and in other parts of the world.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

During difficult times, some of us here have learnt ways of looking to the future. We hold onto the knowledge that this will not last forever. For me, this skill has a history that can be traced back to my grandmother. She was someone who always used to ask me to think about my future, to make plans, dreams and preparations. She made the future come alive to me. When the Israeli military invaded Nablus and occupied the city we had to remain in our house for many, many days. My grandmother died during this time. Not only were we dealing with the gunfire all around us, but we could not remove my grandmother's body. It lay in the same house with us and this was profoundly distressing to us all. We had to find our way through. Somehow I found the strength to carry her body, to move it from the room we were in. We worked hard to speak with each other of different things so that we could endure this time together. We held our belief in prayers. And we carried on my grandmother's legacy. This will not last forever. We looked to the future. Now, whenever there are difficult times, whenever I face troubles, I look to the future, to tomorrow. The present may hold suffering, but as my grandmother would say, we must make plans, dreams and preparations.

SEARCHING

Due to the occupation, our economy is very poor. We search for work and to find ways to develop our skills. We seek solutions to the difficulties in our lives. Our searching is a form of resistance to the occupation.

MOTHERS' LOVE FOR OUR CHILDREN

As women, we have seen many bad things and our families have suffered. We do everything we can to protect our children. Our mothers were the same. They poured their love into us, and we pour our love into future generations. Our care for our children is like a project for our lives. We seek to make our children special. And if ever their lives are in danger, we do all we can to make

them safe. My small daughter, two years old, was drowning in a pool of water recently. Although I cannot swim, I managed to bring her to safety. Mothers' love for our children is a powerful force. It is powerful all over Palestine.

TO STUDY, TO LEARN AND TO BE INDEPENDENT

Our independence means a lot to us. This is true for the Palestinian people and also for us as individuals. My father used to take me with him to his work so that I wouldn't stay in the street and throw stones. He owned a store that sold cars and I watched him as he worked. I started to learn about having a career. My father taught me the importance of independence and of achieving things in life. When I was sixteen, my father went to Mecca and I opened a shop without him. I began studying and working at the same time. Now I have graduated and I have a job. I have my independence. This is my way of responding to difficult times, to do all I can to make a good life. My father taught me this.

DIGNITY

Over the years, we have had to develop skills in maintaining our dignity. I was a university student, about to graduate, when they arrested me. It was the night before my final exam and I had been up late studying and preparing. Finally I got to sleep when two hours later the soldiers surrounded the house. They took me away and placed me in a small cell where they used many forms of torture and interrogation. They put a lot of pressure on me, tried to convince me to say things I had not done. They assured me that if I confessed, I would then be released in time for the graduation party that I had been so looking forward to. I refused. I was suffering a lot during this time but I did not let them see it. I showed the contrary, that I did not care. We have learnt skills in hiding our suffering, in maintaining our dignity. We have learnt skills in keeping what is precious to us hidden away. They used different methods. They took me out of isolation and into a cell with other prisoners. But I knew these other prisoners were collaborating with the Israelis so I said nothing to them. I just pretended that I did not know what was going on, but spoke of nothing of importance. The interrogator started to add more and more allegations to try to influence me to confess. Sometimes my indifference made him angry. I remember once I asked him if he had a Bachelors Degree in Psychology. When he said yes, I let him know that I had my Masters. The interrogation went on for fifty days before I was taken to court. The prosecutor was asking for a long sentence, but my lawyer insisted on my innocence. In the end they couldn't prove anything and I went back home. I had missed out on my dream to attend the graduation party with my fellow students, but I was able to complete the final exam and graduate. Ironically, the topic for the exam was on ways of torturing prisoners! Looking back, the whole experience was a very difficult one but there were certain skills and knowledge that rescued me and helped me to maintain my dignity. I think dignity has always been important to me, as it is for many of us. As a small child, I used to get into difficult situations with teachers at school. I would question them if they did not show children respect. There was one time in which I was taken to the headmaster. I was very nervous, but when I told the headmaster my version of events he agreed with me! He said that I had a strong personality and he gave me extra responsibilities from then on. He was one person who knew that dignity was important to me as a child. In living under occupation, we do all we can to maintain our dignity and our pride.

TO BE TOGETHER

During the invasion some years ago, we were locked in our home. There was shooting at the building next to ours. There was fire from helicopters and from tanks. We thought it was aimed at our building. We gathered three families together in one room. We tried in this room to search for our safety. Windows were shattering all around us, there was glass blowing into the room. We placed four children under the bed. We were terrified. When the shooting first began, we talked together about religious beliefs, we read from the Koran. At that time, I thought to myself, 'We will die all together or we will live all together'. I was the oldest brother. When I felt my strength was fading, I knew this would affect all the others. I called upon my skills, my prayers and patience. I showed the others my power. If I showed bravery, I knew others would see it and feel it. Finally, I could begin to see hope for the future. In more recent times, when there have been difficulties, I have remembered 'we will die all together or we will live all together'. This philosophy means a lot to me and to others. There is an old Arabic song with these lyrics. In these times, we must be together.

LAUGHTER AND SKILLS OF HUMOUR

All of our cries, all of our tears, are related to the occupation, to checkpoints and to soldiers. But we have skills to make fun of serious situations. There is a proverb in Arabic that says the very worst things in life are those we laugh about. We have many stories about this. I remember times when we would face the checkpoints with laughter. The soldiers did not like this. Once when I was laughing they took me out of our car. It was raining and water was gathering in a puddle. They made me stand there and then I found a rock to sit on. I didn't show that I was angry or sad. I kept my humour with me. We have to take care with this and choose the times and places. But we have skills in making humour in difficult times. This is linked to Arabic history. We know stories of ways in which figures of the past have used imagination and invented stories to get out of certain situations. We also know certain families who are well known for their humour. We expect members of these families to make us laugh. I remember seeing signs that people have placed on the donkeys that they use to travel between villages when the soldiers have blocked the roads. The signs indicate that these donkeys have been turned into taxis! We rescue ourselves and each other through humour.

SONGS FOR THE JOURNEY

Sometimes we may sing in difficult situations. When all the roads are closed the only way out is through the mountains. We have to get out of our cars and walk. Sometimes this is very tiring. Crossing the hills on foot can be exhausting. One day I saw a young man carrying a large bag. He was singing a song in a very loud voice. I asked him why and he explained, 'There is something inside of me. If I do not express it I will explode'. He said that he learnt this skill from a movie. He had seen that mountain climbers sometimes sing together in difficult times. I have always remembered him and how having a song for the journey can make the journey easier.

HONOURING THE FRIENDS WHO WE HAVE LOST

Many of us have lost our dearest friends and we do all we can to honour them. Sometimes we honour them with our tears. There are rivers of tears flowing through Palestine. When we cry for our friends it is like our hearts are moving. There are even times when it is as if the stones are crying with us. Our tears respect those who have been lost. My best friend was killed and I do everything that I can to honour him and our friendship. I spoke with my other friends and we remembered the good times, the happy times that we spent together in the past. I told them it's okay to crybut that we can also remember the good times we shared. When I am with them, I can remember my friend. But when I am alone. I find it too painful to think of him. It is too painful to look at his photograph and I avoid his house. The reason it's so hard to think of him is because our friendship was so strong, so significant to me, to both of us. He was a part of me and I was a part of him. If I had not known him, I would be a different person. So much of me is also about him. Some of us feel that we cannot be happy, cannot swim or laugh, because our friends have died. As if to be happy would be a betrayal. Others of us find some relief to know that our lost friends are in peace and happiness with God. And time itself can make a difference. If it was me who had died, I am not sure how my friend would have coped. Perhaps he would have continued to do the things that we used to do together. Or perhaps he would have stopped doing all that we did. Perhaps he would have stopped visiting the road on which I lived. I am not sure. It is different for everyone. But I know he would be doing all he could to honour our friendship - to continue the legacy of our friendship. We were the finest of friends and I learnt so much about friendship from him. If we lose a friend like that, we cannot simply get on with life. Life can never be the same. We do all we can to honour the friends who we have lost.

SPEAKING WITH FAMILY

During the invasion of Nablus, my family was locked within our house for one week. There was much shooting and they were fearful times. My brother was in jail and we were all very worried about him. We had no electricity or telephones. We did not have enough food. But we did have each other. We would wake at dawn and speak together, calm each other down. My younger sister was very afraid. She would sit in the corner and remain silent. We would not leave her alone. We would sit together. I would always remember what my big brother used to say. He had a great belief in me. He had confidence that I could take a stand. These were difficult times. We had each other. Speaking together carried us through.

MISSING AND LONGING

Sometimes we long to be somewhere different, some place free of tanks and checkpoints. In living a life under occupation, we develop strong skills in longing and in dreams.

ADAPTING

We have learnt to deal with so much. We have had no choice. I remember one time recently, I woke up and saw that a tank had parked itself right outside my window. Then I simply went back to sleep. We are used to extraordinary things happening here. So we have developed extraordinary skills in adapting.

Once a community's skills in survival and resistance are documented in this way, they can be read aloud in ceremonies, or turned into songs, murals, poems, and so on. These are all ways of strengthening resistance and survival.

"We are used to extraordinary things happening here. So we have developed extraordinary skills in adapting."

The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life is a second methodology that was originally developed to respond to vulnerable children in southern Africa. Now the Tree of Life is being used in Palestine (and many other places, see www.dulwichcentre.com.au/tree-of-life.html). It can be used with children, young people or adults.

The Tree of Life begins with a person drawing a tree and then using different parts of the tree to represent different aspects of their life:

THE ROOTS (HERITAGE): The roots of the tree are a prompt for a person to speak about their heritage: where they come from (i.e. village, town, country); their family or community history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family, totem); those who have taught them the most in life; their favourite place at home; a treasured song or dance.

THE GROUND (PRESENT): The ground represents where the person lives at present; and some of the activities that they choose to do and that they enjoy day to day.

THE TRUNK (WHAT IS VALUED/SKILLS): The trunk represents what gets the person through hard times. How do they respond? What survival skills do they use? Also included on the trunk is what the person gives value to, cares about, and their skills and abilities. This may include skills in physical acts, skills of caring, kindness, honesty, etc. Then we can trace the history of these: Who did you learn these from? How long has this been important to you? Where did this come from?

THE BRANCHES (HORIZONS): The branches of the tree represent shared hopes, dreams and wishes: for others, for themselves, for wider community. It's then possible to trace the history of these hopes/wishes: How long have you had these hopes? Where did they come from? How have you held onto them? Did anyone introduce you to these hopes or help you to hold onto them?

LEAVES OF THE TREE (SPECIAL PEOPLE):

The leaves of the tree represent people who are important to the participant. These can be people who are alive or may be people who have passed on.

FRUITS (LEGACIES BEQUEATHED TO US):

The fruits represent gifts that have been passed on to the person, or the contributions others have made to their life.

FLOWERS / SEEDS (LEGACIES WE WISH TO LEAVE): The flowers / seeds of the tree represent gifts that the person wishes to pass onto others. They can also represent the contributions the

person is already making to others.



A Tree of Life in Gaza City

Here is an example of a Tree of Life from a sixteen-year-old boy in Jenin refugee camp who was in a group facilitated by Sahar Mohammed, for young men who were grieving from the loss of family members.

ROOTS:

My family - who I live with

My English teacher

The principal of my school

The special room I like in my home is where the computer is.

My favourite song is from an Egyptian singer, 'the hope of my life'. What is the meaning of these words 'hope of my life?' I remember my dead father while I am listening to this song.

THE GROUND, THE LAND

My house has two floors and seven rooms. I like it too much.

Why is it so significant? That we have it, that we have this house means so much here in Jenin.

Some of the activities that I do day and night are studying and playing with friends.

What is the meaning of this land, this ground of my tree? It means freedom: a freedom to express myself at least.

TRUNK

If I go through hard times what dol do? What gets me through? Support from colleagues. My friends who are supporting me not to smoke. Friendship and supporting each other is the key principle of my life.

BRANCHES

Dreams and hopes for my life: A united Palestine To live a happy life – to be a technician or engineer

LEAVES

My mother because she grew me up and assisted me with mistakes. She taught me to be successful and safe.

Teachers: I learned a lot from them, to respect them and to respect me.

There are two uncles who have died who I have included on my leaves. I had a very close relationship with them. They took care of me when I was a child.

Forest of Life

In the second part of the process, where possible, we gather a number of people's trees together to create a 'Forest of Life'. This forest may be made up of family members, or friends, or we do this process in a group setting. The facilitator may also make their own tree.

Once the forest has been created, the facilitator finds a way to acknowledge something significant about each 'tree' ... so that each person experiences that they have made a contribution to 'the forest'.



A Forest of life in Gaza City

The Storms of Life: and talking about survival skills

In the third part of the process, we discuss the 'storms of life', the hardships that people face and the ways that people survive such hardships. We move between natural metaphors and people's lives. When working with children, we might first talk about the difficulties that trees, forests and animals face. Then we talk about the difficulties that children face and how this affects them. Finally, we explore animals' survival skills and then children's survival skills.

When working with adults, we explore their survival skills by asking questions such as:

During difficult times, during the storms of life, what enables you to keep going/helps lift you up? What is it that keeps you strong during difficult times? When things get tough, when you feel down, what are the things you do that help support you to stay strong; to get back on track? It might be connecting to or thinking about certain people, places, family, culture, memories of places or loved ones who have passed away? Or it might be something you do, that makes you feel strong: praying, music, talking, cooking, cleaning, exercise, something else? What is it that helps you get back up when the going gets tough? What helps you to get through the storms of life?

Sometimes it is easier for people to speak collectively about the storms of life rather than individually.

We then explore the heritage of these survival skills: Who are the people in your life who have showed you how to survive? And we ask participants to tell a story about one of their survival skills/strengths. They might tell us about:

- A time when you have used this survival skill.
- How you learned this strength? Where you learned it?
- Who you learned it from/with? Who would be least surprised to know that you have this survival skill? Who recognised this skill/ strength of yours?
- Are there others you know who might have that strength/skill also? Who are you joined with in this?

If possible, we document these survival skills.

We remember our friends and family

After all the young men in the group in Jenin had shared their Trees of Life, the following document was made from their words.

We are a group of young men from Jenin Refugee Camp here in Palestine. We are 16 years old.

Today we met and talked about those friends and family members who we have lost and who we remember.

Some of us spoke about our uncles who played with us when we were children and who were killed during the massacre in the refugee camp.

One of us spoke about his mother. He said, 'She cared about my life and taught me how to be an honest man. I remember her words: "respect other people, especially those older than you, and take care of your brothers".

One of us spoke about his father who died one year ago: 'He took care of me all my life. I loved him so much'.

Some of us spoke about our friends and neighbours. We spoke of how important they were to us, how we would talk together, play together and pray together.

One of us spoke about his brother.

We have all lost people who are special to us, some due to violence, some due to illness. And today we spoke of them, we remembered them together. This makes us proud and sad. It takes a particular strength to remember.

We think that our loved ones would like it very much that we remember them. We think they would be very pleased and proud that we talked about them today.

If they were standing with us today this is what we think they would say:

'He would thank me for talking about him. I want to circulate his story all over the world.'

'The people I lost would be proud of me and my family. They would be happy.'

'My father told me that there was something wrong with his life. He told me to go a different road than the one he took. I am listening to this message from him. And I think he would be proud of this'

One of us also said that:

'Our conversation today reminded me that I must stay alive in order to remember my friend's life.'

At the end of the meeting, one member of the group said to the facilitators and the visitors from Australia and Canada:

'You took care of us today. You care about us. My mother advised me to take care of myself for all my life. Our conversation today reminded me of her.'

We are a group of young men from Jenin Refugee Camp here in Palestine. We are 16 years old and we remember our loved ones. Today we say to our loved ones:

'We will never forget you. We love you and we remember you.'

We would like to send our words and this message to other young men in different countries who have lost loved ones. We hope that our words are helpful to you. And we would like to hear about how you remember and honour those special people you have lost. Thank you.

PS. Most of us here support Real Madrid ... what football team do you support?



The Team of Life

As indicated by the young men in Jenin, many Palestinians are interested in football! The Team of Life approach uses sporting metaphors to enable people to deal with traumatic experience without having to speak directly about it. The first step is to create a 'team sheet'.



An example of a Team sheet from a Palestinian ex-detainee in collaboration with narrative therapist Nihaya Abu-Rayyan.

We can think of our life as a team. Who are the people most significant to you? The team members of your life can be alive or no longer living. They can be present in your life or people you have known in the past. These are the people most influential (in a positive way) in your life.

GOAL KEEPER

Who acts as your goal keeper? This could be a person, a group, even an organisation. Who looks out for you, who guards your goals, who is most reliable, who would this be?

DEFENSE

Who assists your goalkeeper in protecting your dreams, in protecting what is precious to you?

YOUR 'ATTACK'

Who assists you, encourages you in trying to score goals?

OTHER TEAM-MATES

Who are some of the other team-mates in your life, those you play with, those whose company you enjoy?

COACH

Who is it you have learned most things from? It is possible to have more than one coach. And it's possible that they may or may not still be alive. What are some of the things that they have taught you?

INTERCHANGE

Are there some people who are sometimes on your team and sometimes are not ... they might be very helpful to you in life some days and then on other days not helpful at all? If so, these are your interchange team members. What sort of times do they help? What sort of times do they not help? How have you learnt the difference?

THEME SONG

Do you have a particular song that means a lot to you, that you could call the 'theme song' of your life at the moment? If so, what would it be? Why is it significant to you?

SUPPORTERS IN THE STANDS

When you are at your home ground, who are the supporters you imagine in the stands. Who are the people (living or non-living) who are hoping you will do well?

KEY VALUES YOU ARE DEFENDING

What are some of the important values of your team? What is this team standing for? What values are you defending? (Put these behind your goals.) What is the history of these? Have they been a part of your team for a long time?

YOUR POSITION

What is your position on this team? Where would you place yourself?

FIRST AID KIT

When your team faces a difficulty (an injury/a playergoing down) what do you turn to? What

supportsyour team in hard times? What is in your first aid kit?

HOME GROUNDS (FIELDS OF DREAMS)

What are your home grounds? Where are the placesyou feel most 'at home'? You may have more thanone place. Your home ground might be somewhere thatyou go regularly, or somewhere that you only visit in your memories or dreams now.

HAMZA'S TEAM OF HOPE

Here's an example of Hamza's Team of Life. Hamza experiences epileptic seizures and suffered greatly as a result of medical negligence during three years in Israeli prisons. Nihaya Abu-Rayyan asked him questions as he created the following team sheet:



Nihaya: (Home ground) Can you talk to me about the places where you feel most comfortable?

Hamza: There is a large open land field in the west part of my village which we call 'the land of roses – Khalat Al-wardah'. I visit it every two, three or five days and spend in it not less than three to three hours. Sometimes, I sit in it, or I walk around. No one lives there, I wish my house could be there.

Who is your team's goalkeeper, someone you trust and works to guard your goals?

My older brother, Mahmud. I rely on him for many things in my life.

Who helps the goalkeeper in defence of your dreams? Who stands up for all that is precious and valuable to you?

My brother, Mahmud, my brother, Musaab, and my father. These are ones I feel are keen about me. They are keen for me to achieve my goals.

And who is it that helps you and encourages you to achieve your goals?

My wife Inas, my mother Aisha, my brother Mahmud, My brother-in-law Fayz. They do not let me fail or get frustrated. They are always encouraging me to continue to think about the future and achieve my goals.

Who are other people in your team of life who are playing with you, and you spend fun times with?

My brother-in-law Fayz and my brother Mahmud. I feel joy and have fun with them. I am sure to visit them, to spend time with them, even in the rain.

Who would you consider to be a coach in your life – someone who you have learned from? It's possible that you may have more than one coach, are they may be still alive or departed from this world? What are some of the things that you have learned from them?

They are two people, Mohammed and Rafe, my friends. We can discuss anything together. Always they advise me. We protect each other from everything.

Are there people in your team who are on your interchange bench? They may be in your life and help you in some days, but on other days not be so involved. These people are like reserves...

My cousin, Mohammed, and my friend, Tariq. When I was in jail, both of them contracted to build my house and cared for it. Until this moment we are always close together and we are thinking and planning to work on a project together.

Do you have a specific song that means a lot to you ... a 'team song' in your life?

When I'm happy I sing prison songs. I feel joy when I hear the echo of their lyrics.

When you are playing on your home ground, who are the fans will encourage you. Who are the people

(still alive or dead) whom always hope you are okay?

My father-in-law, Khader, and sister, Saida. I feel they rejoice for my happiness. They are always encouraging me and believe that I am able to overcome difficulties.

What are the values that are important to your team? What is your team defending? Have these values been important to your team for a long time?

We always defend our reputation and our honour. And as a family we protect our relationships and depend on each other. After I get sick, because of epileptic seizures, some of my team had to help me to defend my life and values. Now, slowly, I am becoming someone who can depend on himself and who others can depend upon. Pride is sometimes more important than need.

What position are you playing in your team? And why?

I sit with the reservists players because at the moment I need my family's support because of epileptic seizures. I am not always able to assist myself. There may be times when I'm out of work and when I fall to the ground from the epileptic seizures. At these times others help me to rise again.

When your team is facing difficulties, how do you deal with it? What supports this team in difficult times? What is in your first aid kit?

Above everything, we believe in God. We are satisfied with what is destined for us in this life: 'And to God the believers put their trust' (verse of the Qur'an). Our belief brings us patience, helps us to tolerate the pain and to face calamities together. My team also assists to keep me conscious when the epileptic seizures happen. They give me medication and take me to see a doctor. They also helped me financially and morally in reconstructing my home and my marriage. More importantly, if we feel the satisfaction of God through prayer and satisfaction of our parents then these are the things that help me to recover and to be calm.

Finally, what name would you give to this team?

Let me think about this...[after some time]...I will call it the Team of Hope (Saraya Al- Amal).

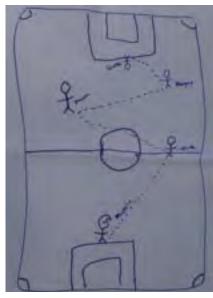
Goals of life

The second step is to talk about one goal/ achievement that this team has already scored. What is a collective goal/achievement that has been scored by this team? This could include goals such as:

- surviving prison
- staying together through hard times
- keeping children safe
- getting an education

A 'goal map' is then drawn. We ask the person to draw a goal map that indicates the different contributions that people made to the achievement of this goal:

- Can you describe who was involved in the scoring/attaining of this goal? Was it a soloeffort? Or did other members of your team of life help out? How? Did your coach encourage you or help you with tactics?
- What parts did everyone play in this?
 Go through each theme (home ground, goalkeeper, defence, attack, teammates, etc.)
- What skills or knowledge or values did you or others use in the scoring of this goal?
- Where did these skills/knowledge/values come from?
- What training did you and others do to make it possible to score this goal? How often did you do this – each day, once a week? Where did you train? How did you learn how to do this training? Did anyone show you?



An example of a goal map

Goal celebration

Often people who have endured torture have never had other people witness or honour their survival. Through the metaphor of football, we find ways to celebrate the significant goals that individuals, families, friends and communities have achieved. Once the goal map is drawn we ask:

- How do you celebrate goals when they are scored in football? Go through all the different ways ... these might include clapping, shouting, dancing, jumping up and down, even 'shooting our guns up into the air!'
- Which of these would be most appropriate to use to celebrate this goal?
- Then we re-tell the goal (as a commentator would) or re-enact it with different people
- playing the roles of each person on the team. And the rest of the audience cheers, or dances or shouts ... whatever has been decided they will do. This process can be both light-hearted and profoundly significant at the same time, particularly when the 'goals' being celebrated relate to survival.

Looking forwards

Only after people have a 'heritage of achievement' is it possible to look forwards. After we have celebrated each person's past goal, then we ask:

- What is the next goal you are planning to achieve?
- How are you training to achieve this?
- Who are you going to involve?



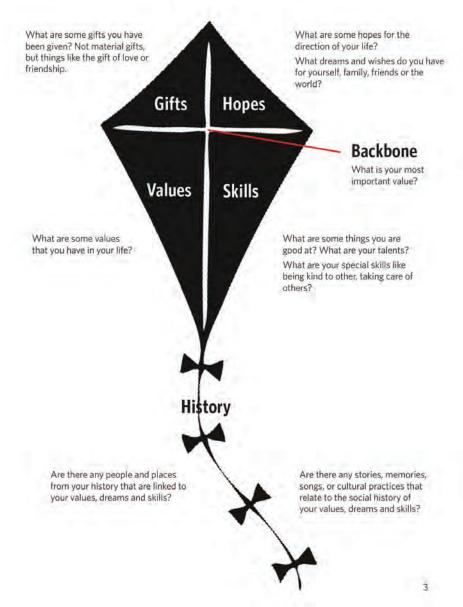
A Team of Life retelling in Gaza City

The Kite of Life

Because Palestinian children often love to make and fly kites, we also use the metaphor of the kite in our work. As Dr Akram Othman explains,

'For Palestinian people, kites represent hope and freedom. Here we facing strong winds and kites represent our hopes and dreams'.

Different parts of the kite can be used to represent different parts of life:







المحادة المحا

Alaa Harb used the Kite of Life with a child who has a problem in speaking. The child identified on her kite:

SKILLS: Swimming and dancing

HOPES FOR SUCCESS: to have a gallery and

be a teacher

IMPORTANT PEOPLE: mother and father

PLACES: my home and my school

In the middle of the kite (the backbone) the child wrote what is most important to her in life: *how I can contribute*.

The facilitator asks questions to get more stories about the child's skills, values and hopes.

Dr Akram Othman asks questions such as:

- Who did you learn swimming and dancing from?
- When did you start dreaming these dreams?
- Who taught you the importance of contributing to others?
- Is there anyone who would be proud of this Kite? (This might include the Prophet Mohammed if the Kite represents significant Islamic values)

A festival of Kites

Kites can then be placed together to make a 'festival of kites'. Participants speak about the important words and stories that their kite represents.



Strong winds

We can then externalise problems facing children by talking about the strong winds that they and their families are facing, and the skills that they are using to fly through hardship:



Here is a letter by Palestinian teachers and workers in Gaza that they wrote to the people who first developed the Kite of Life, Tamil refugees in Toronto, Canada.

Hello. We are writing to you from Gaza, Palestine.

We work here under siege. Today we learned about the Kite of Life and we decided that we would like to write to you ... those who developed the first Kites of Life. We know that you are refugees who fled to safety in Canada from a war in Sri Lanka. We heard you were like kites ... that you had to fly for your lives. We heard about the strong winds that you have had to face.

We know a lot about war here too. We know about strong winds. We are living now in a very difficult situation. This is the most crowded place in the world. At times we don't have enough electricity or water or gas. And every day we wait ... always expecting the next attack.

We also know a lot about kites! Children here love making kites and flying them. In fact, do you know that we are the world kite flying champions? We are in the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest kite festival ... over 6000 kites on the Gaza beach!

Today we enjoyed making our Kites of Life. On our Kites we wrote what we care about, what we give value to. This includes human rights, dignity and our country.

We also wrote down our dreams ... dreams of solidarity, of peace, of safety, of liberty, of returning to our homes, of praying in Jerusalem, of our children playing in a safe place, and of giving more than we receive. Do you know that sometimes children here colour their kites like a Palestinian flag? This way they are flying kites and our flag at the same time.

On our Kites of Life we also included some of the special knowledge we have gained through our lives. This includes knowledge of patience, of forgiveness, of respecting a diversity of thought, and knowledge about standing up again after we have been knocked down.

And in the centre of our kites, we wrote down our reasons for living:

- To make smiles on the faces of those I love
- To carry on the legacies and learning of my father
- To work so that all the world's children can live and love
- To help others whether they are relatives or not

These are just some of our reasons for living. On the tails of our kites, we spoke about the histories of what we care about, the histories of our knowledge, and the histories of our dreams. When we think about this, there are many memories that come into our minds

We look back at the old generations and think about how they were living in the villages or cities.

When we make certain foods we think of our older people.

When we dance the dubka, we know we are dancing what our people have always danced.

When we remember special proverbs or phrases that have been passed down to us, we are remembering the words of our parents.

Special handmade traditional dresses or particular types of pottery also hold memories for us.

When the electricity fails and it is time again for candles this too reminds us of our old people.

There are also actions of memory and honour that we fulfil. One of us often visits her father's tomb.

And we each have particular memories that are important to us: 'I remember when my grandfather was dying. He gave to me the real documents of our home in Palestine and the key to the door of our home. I remember this always'.

These are some of the memories we included on the tails of our Kites of Life.

After we had each made our own kites we placed them together ... we created our own festival. It did not have 6000 kites but it looked very beautiful. We will send you some photographs!

Here in Gaza, children and families face many strong winds. There are the winds of the occupation, of always waiting for the next military attack. There are the winds of poverty and unemployment. There are also the winds of Palestinian internal politics and there is hardship within families. There are sometimes particular strong winds for women, such as early marriage or violence within families. Men have up to four wives here, but women are allowed only one husband. There are also the winds of addiction and the health of families suffer when there is unhealthy water and air, not enough electricity and poor health services. All these winds affect children's lives.

Often children have nowhere safe to play. Sometimes they cannot sleep or may wet the bed. They may be lonely, or run away from school. Sometimes these winds bring fear, or depression or aggression. The winds can bring nightmares and lead children not to believe in themselves. Sometimes the winds lead to troubles with speech and children cannot find words. At their worst, these winds can lead some children to no longer want to live here on earth.

Yes, we know a lot about strong winds here in Gaza. But we also know a lot about ways of getting through strong winds. Sometimes you can see children flying kites in strong winds. They hold the string very tight. Often they call their friends to help. You need to know the direction of the wind. And you need to make your kite well, it needs to be well balanced. We might place some weight on the tail. The rope must be strong and the size of the kite must be suitable for the person flying it. There are particular skills in flying kites through strong winds. We must know when to pull in the string and when to let it go. We choose the right places where there are no wires or obstacles ... and we don't fly kites where the soldiers will shoot them down! There's also an Arabic saying that reminds us 'if there is a strong wind then close the door'. This reminds us that sometimes in the very strong winds, it's best not to fly the kite and just seek safety!

Just as Palestinian children have special knowledge about flying kites in strong winds, we adults also have special knowledge in surviving the strong winds of life. In spite of all the difficulties we face here, we are standing on our feet very strongly.

There are so many different things we do to endure strong winds.

We stay together, sit at home and talk or sing or dance. We find ways to take away the fear. We tell good stories.

One of us remembered that when the bombing was happening near his home, he would gather his children and together they would raise their voices and shout very loudly in one voice 'Allah Akbar'

Some of us head to the sea or we find comfort in tears and crying.

Others head to the mosque and read the Koran or pray.

We might turn to talk to the head person of the family. Or do something as small but significant as eat sweets. One of us spoke about how she ate sweets every day when the bombing was happening.

Acts of kindness also make a difference. We give each other food.

Our children also do different things to find comfort. They make drawings or watch cartoons. And often it is children who make it possible for adults to go on with life. They give us the reason to go on. We must make a good atmosphere for them and this makes a better atmosphere for us also.

And we talk together, like we have talked today. We share our sorrows and share our lives.

Today, you shared with us the Kite of Life. Thank you for this. We are now going to use this with our children here in Gaza.

We have three new inventions for the Kite of Life that we also want to share with you! We decided that the frills or ribbons on the sides of the kite can represent 'the things in life that lift us up'. The frame of the kite can represent 'what keeps our life in balance'. And here in Gaza, we sometimes place small messages on the string of the kite. The wind then carries these messages up the string, as if they are climbing into the air. We decided that we will include on our kites a message to the next generation. We hope you like these Palestinian inventions!

There are also two Arabic songs we would like to share with you about kites! One is a song by Lebanese singer, Fairouz. It is about memories and kites. And then there is a special Palestinian song, in which a child sings about letting their kite be their eyes. They fly their kite so high so that they can see their homeland.

We are writing to you from Gaza, Palestine. We hope that you enjoy the freedom that we are seeking. We hope for a better life for you and for us.

Rituals of acknowledgement

Where possible, we end the Tree of Life, the Team of Life and the Kite of Life, with a ritual of acknowledgement. We bring together the significant people in the person's life, and share the trees/teams/kites and people's survival skills. We may also award certificates, or read aloud poems, letters or documents about people's skills. Sometimes songs or prayers or food may also be shared. These are rituals to acknowledge people's skills of survival.





PART FOUR:

Difficult topics

The final section of this handbook consists of three documents about difficult topics. The first two relate to ways of keeping Palestinian families strong by addressing violence within homes. The final document is addressed to those who may be losing the will to live.

To relate to women in our proper way: voices of Palestinian men

This document has been created from the words of male workers at the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Ramallah, Palestine. It was been written in the hope of addressing gender-based violence in Palestine and beyond. It is to be read in conjunction with the document 'The journey of Palestinian women: Challenges and successes' which contains the words and perspective of the women workers at the TRC.

We are a group of men who work as counsellors at the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (TRC) in Ramallah, Palestine. Our work is about responding to families affected by the occupation. We meet with exdetainees, with families who have lost loved ones as a result of the occupation, and with survivors of torture and trauma. And today we met together to talk about violence against women in families. This is an issue that we care about as men.

Here in Palestine, there are long traditions about how to be a good man, a good father, in families. A good father is one who takes up his responsibilities towards his wife and his children. He often takes primary responsibility for working outside the home and he has also responsibilities inside the home. He treats the children all the same way, the girls the same as the boys. He gives time and he cares if anyone is sick in the family. A good father is a good negotiator and he must teach his children patience, honesty and respect. As fathers, we teach our children through doing things together such as fasting. Fasting teaches you to be patient, to feel together and to consider others who cannot have regular food. Fathers show their children love through the tradition of fasting.

Here in Palestine, men, women and children also have to resist the occupation and we see the effects of occupation everywhere. We see the effects as we work with men who have been imprisoned and tortured. We see the effects in families whose fathers and sons have been killed by the Israeli military. We see the effects in the economy, the poverty and unemployment. And we see the effects of the occupation in violence in Palestinian homes.

Today we talked together about violence against women in Palestinian homes is a serious issue. Too many Palestinian women experience violence in the home and this violence increases or decreases depending on the political and economic situation. Sometimes the violence happens after men have been tortured in prison and then released. Or it occurs when men have been in prison for many years away from their families and when they are released they go back home and there is no work. This is the broader context of men and women's lives here in Palestine.

We hope this document might help us to work together with our women colleagues here at TRC to prevent violence in Palestinian families. We also hope it might be helpful to other Palestinian men who care about this issue and who also want to stop violence against women. Maybe it can also be helpful to people outside of Palestine. We know that violence against women occurs in every country of this world.

We would like to begin by saying that the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, spoke 1400 years ago about the importance of women's roles and women's rights. He said, 'Who deserves your friendship? Your mother, your mother, your mother, and then your father.' The Prophet Mohammed spoke always that women are the sisters of men.

We believe it is important to speak about violence against women. This is about following the lead of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him.

As counsellors, we are trying to assist families who are living under occupation so we must find ways to respond to violence against women. This is a huge issue, but as counsellors responding to political violence, we are used to having to deal with huge issues.

HOW DO WE FACE THIS ISSUE IN OUR WORK?

Sometimes we meet with women who are experiencing violence from their husbands and they speak with us about this. Perhaps the woman or the man is an ex-prisoner. Perhaps their son is a martyr and we may discover that, not only is the family living with the effects of the occupation, but the woman is also experiencing violence from her husband. In the worst situations, the woman's life may be at risk. Sometimes there are beatings every day. Often when we meet with families they do not speak openly about violence

in the home. We try to help them to speak about these issues and we listen for the possibilities of violence between people's words.

When we meet with men who are being violent to their wives, sometimes the man thinks this is the proper role of the father in the family. It might be taken for granted or seen as normal life. Other times, he will know that it is wrong and wants to change.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THIS VIOLENCE?

When a husband is beating his wife we see many effects in the family. The children are affected. They may be hyperactive or angry. One child may start beating his brother or sister or other children in the school. We find that boys start using anger and violence more than girls. Some girls, if they see their father beating all of the family, they may become afraid of all men around them. This is a form of suffering.

The children in the family may feel no security and may be afraid of their father. They may speak always very quietly to their father, showing great respect because of their fear of his violence. Some children may experience bedwetting.

There are many effects on the woman too. She may have no trust in herself. She may have so much fear and be unable to speak. Sometimes a wife doesn't speak to her husband about their children or about what is happening at home because she is afraid of his anger.

Sometimes men who beat their wives may force them to have sex after they have beaten them. This can have very bad effects for women too.

Men's violence to women can also contribute to women's violence to children. And in some situations the wife may start being violent back to the husband.

We find that the relationship between the husband and wife always changes if there is violence. It becomes very weak and full of problems. They may live together but with no care. It's like there is no relationship between them.

There are effects on men's lives too. If they are violent in the home then the man's role in the house is changed. If he is all the time beating then he is no longer like a father. The role of

fathers is to take care of children ... but if a man is violent he will be unable to fulfil this duty of caring. This role will be lost. He may also lose his wife. She may leave the house.

WHAT ARE THE DILEMMAS OR CHALLENGES WE FACE IN TRYING TO RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Every day in our work we are dealing with the effects of political violence on men, women and children. Life under occupation brings so much suffering. In this context, trying to address violence in the home is very challenging. There are particular beliefs that make it harder. Some people think that in the family it must be 'His word only', that the man must hold all the strength. This means that when working with men in some families they don't accept us to speak about the violence. They say, 'This is my life, this is my family.' We have to find ways of dealing with these attitudes.

And sometimes, wives cannot speak to us because they are so afraid. Some women who are exposed to violence do not even speak to their families. And because men do not talk about the violence then this silence makes it hard to deal with.

And when violence is occurring, we want to work with all of the family but it can be difficult to bring the husband and wife to the same session. We must find ways to ensure the safety of the woman is not compromised.

There are many challenges in responding to this issue. But we must find some ways.

HOW DO FAMILIES RESPOND TO TRY TO PROTECT WOMEN AND TRY TO PREVENT VIOLENCE?

In our experience there are many ways that Palestinian families try to respond to violence in the home and to prevent further harm. We have made a list of these.

Some of things the woman may do include:

- Some women may talk to their family.
- They may go to their father's home.
- They may talk to a counsellor.
- Some women might say, 'If there is violence, I will sleep in another room (no sex)'.
- Some women leave the house.
- Some women go to the police and seek a divorce.

- Some women may say 'If you don't stop beating me I will leave and leave the children with you'. But most women don't want to leave their children.
- Some wives go and work out of the home. This gives them some space and independence. It enables them to spend many hours out of home.

Some of the things the woman's family may do include:

- Building their home next door to their daughter. They may choose to live next door so that they can offer protection.
- Sometimes if the woman's family knows about the violence, if she has come to the family home crying, then her brothers might come and talk to the husband. They may speak with the husband to try to stop the violence.
- If this does not work, the brothers might come and beat the husband but this doesn't usually work. In fact, it can cause social problems between the families.
- In our tradition, if there is a problem in a family, then you may go to speak to the 'big one' in the family. This may be the woman's father or her uncle. The 'big one' is a person who is respected by all in the family. This is a person who listens and then does the negotiations. He has strong authority. He is respected and he has experienced life. The man and woman might go to him or he might go to their house to listen and then try to solve the problems. This is a part of our tradition.

Some things the husband and wife might do together include:

- Our religion says that men must respect women. So sometimes wives and husbands might read religious texts together about respecting each other.
- Sometimes the woman might know of other family members who have very good relations between husbands and wives. They might look around at these examples and talk with them.

We didn't talk about any things that the man might do to prevent his violence. We will talk about this and add this to the document in the future. We also know an organisation has set up a safe house for women who are experiencing violence. Later we will talk more about what different organisations are trying to do to respond.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW AS WORKERS AND WHAT MORE CAN WE DO?

There are many different ways that we as workers try to respond to violence against women and there is more that we can do. This was our first conversation on this topic so these are starting points:

- We try to help families to speak about these issues and to keep speaking about them.
- We listen carefully as people are talking.
 We know they might not speak directly about violence so we listen for possibilities of violence between people's words. We listen for words like 'my husband does not understand me' or 'my children are suffering'. These might be signs of violence.
- We can talk with families about what is likely to happen to the family, the children, if violence in the home continues. How will your future be?
- We could be involved in raising community awareness about these issues. We could run workshops for men and for women.
- We can seek out ways that people in other Arabic countries are trying to respond to violence against women. One of us told a story about a man in Egypt. After this man had been violent, his wife asked him to create a banner acknowledging his responsibility and that he was sorry. He did this and the banner was shown publicly. We could explore our own Palestinian ways for men to take some action about men's violence.
- If it is hard to work together with the woman and the man, sometimes two therapists can work separately with the man and the woman.

- Sometimes when we know there is violence occurring, we have home visits with one male therapist and one woman therapist. The man sits with the man while the woman sits with the woman and then we can see if we can come together to talk about it.
- We must always try to find safety in the family for the women, the men and the children.
- Perhaps we can explore using documents in this work.

Here in Palestine, we work with families who have been affected by the occupation. There are so many forms of violence that Palestinian men and women face each day and every day there are new settlements on our land.

Here at the TRC we work to assist families to reclaim their lives from this violence.

As men, we are now trying to follow the lead of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, as we seek to address violence against women here in Palestine.

We are also following the lead of men in our own families – grandfathers, fathers, uncles – who experienced so much violence in their own lives, who experienced the violence of generations of invasions, and yet who would sit with their families at night, talking and always remembering religious messages that offer encouragement, guidance and support.

And we are following Palestinian and Arabic traditions. When problems arise in families there is a particular way of responding in our village life. There is a tradition where others come to the family to talk, to safeguard all the members of the family, and to solve problems between family members. That is also our role now.

We hope you will join us.

"As men, we are now trying to follow the lead of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, as we seek to address violence against women here in Palestine."

The journey of Palestinian women: Challenges and successes

This document has been created from the words of women workers at the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Ramallah, Palestine.

Here in Palestine, we are living under occupation. There is so much political violence. There are so many pressures on our families and relationships.

Women have always played crucial roles in the Palestinian struggle. We share this struggle with our men and there is a long history to this. Looking back to 1948 and 1967 women have always been involved in the struggle for Palestine. More recently, women have been involved in the intifadas. Women have lost their lives in this struggle. Women have been imprisoned. And we have also offered our sons and husbandsfor the struggle and lost them. So many of us as Palestinian women dedicate ourselves to visiting our sons, brothers, fathers or husbands in prison, travelling far to do this, sometimes leaving home at 3am week after week after week for years.

Not only do we as women contribute to the struggle against the occupation, we also work to create Palestinian civil society. There are women who are village chiefs. There are women who work as doctors, engineers, as teachers in universities and schools, in every domain of public life. There are women in key leadership roles in the Palestinian Parliament. And there is also a Palestinian women's football team. Within our families and within society, as Palestinian women we are doing all we can to create a better future for our children.

We are group of women counsellors who work at the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (TRC). Our centre works with men and women and families who are affected by political violence. We work to address violence against men, violence against women, violence against children, and violence against young people and children.

As women counsellors, we work with the mothers of martyrs, women who are ex-detainees, and women whose husbands and sons are in prison. As we assist these women in dealing with the

effects of the occupation, we also try to assist them when they may be experiencing violence in their homes. Responding to violence against women when you are living under occupation can be very difficult.

We have put together this document to share what we have learnt along the way. We hope this document will assist us and other Palestinian women and Palestinian men to protect Palestinian families from violence in all its forms. And perhaps it will be helpful to those outside Palestine. We know that violence against women occurs in every country.

TALKING ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In our experience, Palestinian women who are experiencing violence in their homes are often very afraid to talk about this. Sometimes women have been threatened not to talk to anyone about what happens at home. The threat may be more violence, or the threat may be of being divorced or killed.

During our first meeting with women, we ask directly about violence and sexual abuse. As part of the TRC assessment we ask about violence from a family member, from local people, from teachers, and/or sexual abuse. Very often women deny any experiences of violence in the early interviews and only begin to disclose later in therapy when they experience our trust.

When women do talk with us they often say 'Please do not tell anyone. If anyone knows then the violence will increase, but I need to talk with you to break my fear.'

As we know that women may find it difficult to speak about violence in their home, we often ask about symptoms including anxiety, nervousness, and whether their partner is violent to their children. These are some ways to make it more possible for women to speak about violence in the home.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Just as there many different forms of political violence in Palestine, we have learnt that it is also important to be aware of many different forms of violence against women. These include violence in marriage as well as violence against single women.

Violence in marriage can include physical battering, isolating her from other people, calling her crazy or mad. Violence from husbands can also include economic control and being ordered and treated like a servant.

Single women are also exposed to violence. They can be forbidden from continuing their education, forbidden from travelling alone. Single women are sometimes forced to marry against their will or to enter forced sexual relationships. In the worst instances, single women or divorced women may be killed for being in a relationship with a man. This is called honour killing.

And both single and married women may be subjected to be watched all the time, placed under observation about how they dress and act.

We also think it is important to be aware of the sexual abuse of daughters. There may also be sexual abuse from husbands, relatives, fathers-in-law, colleagues, teachers, or family members. As workers we have learned that we must be aware of all these different forms of violence. We must find ways in which women can speak of these different experiences.

THE EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON MARRIED AND SINGLE WOMEN

We have also learnt a lot about the many different effects of violence against women.

There are physical effects such as severe headaches, abdominal pain, high blood pressure and nervousness. While medical tests show no reason for these, we know that experiences of violence may be the cause.

Violence also brings fear into women's lives. Women may become frightened all the time. They are afraid if the husband knows they are speaking, afraid of losing their children, afraid of social stigma. Sometimes this fear is so severe she may have thoughts to end her life. Men often accuse women of being crazy or mad when they speak about the violence from the man and this can lead to women becoming isolated.

Some women in these situations may come to hate all men and this can reflect negatively on her relationship with her male children. The violence from men to women can also lead to mothers' violence towards children.

And then there are the effects on the children. When children are exposed to violence this

effects their schooling and their psychological wellbeing. Sometimes it causes bedwetting.

Often there are long-term effects on the family. If a woman leaves her home, her family may reject the children because the father uses violence. Or the father may refuse to allow the mother to take the children with her and uses the children as a way of placing pressure on the woman.

Just as there are so many effects of political violence and so many effects of the occupation on Palestinian men, women and children, we have also learned there are many different effects of violence on women in the home.

CHALLENGES WE FACE

As workers there are many challenges that we face. The biggest challenge is the occupation and the continuing political violence that our men, women and children are subjected to. As workers, we also live under occupation. Our lives are not separate from those with whom we work.

There are extra challenges when it comes to trying to stop violence against women in the home. In order to stop this violence we must find ways to work with the one who makes the violence. This can be difficult. Sometimes the woman is so fearful she does not want us to approach her husband.

One of the greatest challenges is the social stigma attached to divorce which is unacceptable in our society. The societal expectations that women should put up with violence is also a great problem. As is the fact that men and children may blame women if they do separate or end the relationship.

Some of the ways in which people use some religious beliefs can also be challenging. If women think 'This is my destiny" of "if I become patient my God in heaven will reward me" then sometimes this makes it more difficult too.

So there are many obstacles. But we are Palestinian, so we know about finding a way around obstacles.

SOME OF OUR WAYS OF RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE HOME

In addition to the ways we are responding to political violence, as workers, there are also many things we are doing to respond to violence against women:

- Most importantly, we are trying to change our own thinking. We are trying never to blame the woman.
- We are looking for reasons that make violence against women acceptable in our society and we are questioning these.
- We ask questions with every new client to screen for violence and sexual abuse.
- If we meet with an unmarried pregnant woman, we make referrals to the Social Ministry who facilitate safe housing for her and who then seek to gain agreement from the family not to harm her.
- We work to find words for women to name violence. We acknowledge that sometimes women prefer to name violence indirectly (e.g. injustice, inhumanity). Other women prefer to name it directly.
- When working with women we use externalising conversations to explore what is going on, to name this, to explore the effects of the problem, and to ask women to take a position in relation to the problem.
- When we know violence is occurring in a home, we send two therapists on the home visit (one female, one male). They enter the house with a plan between the therapists to work individually with the husband and wife. Later, after many sessions, we may bring the husband and wife together. Later still we may suggest family therapy.
- We listen and acknowledge what the woman is suffering.
- We help women find their identity separate from working like a servant.
- We write letters to women who are survivors of violence which acknowledge their

- alternative stories, for example, the ways the woman is honoured by others, all she is trying to do, and her skills in managing so much.
- Sometimes, when a family has lost their son as a martyr, we can organise for someone to visit the husband, to sit with him, without him knowing his wife has told us about the violence. This is an opening to build a relationship with the man and to assist him to reduce and stop the violence in the home.
- We run groups for the wives of prisoners and we run groups for men. In both these sorts of groups we try to find ways to talk about violence. We are going to explore further ways of doing this.
- And we are talking with our male colleagues and working together on this issue and all issues.

As Palestinians, we are proud of the ways in which we resist the effects of the occupation. We are proud of the ways our men, our women and our young people, resist the occupation and the political violence we are subjected to.

As well as dealing with the occupation, we are also trying to find ways to respond to and prevent violence against women. This is a great challenge. But as we are Palestinians, we are up for a challenge!

There is a saying in our culture, 'The woman is half of the society but because she is mother of the man she is all the society.'

We are finding ways to address violence against women, because violence against women is violence against Palestinian society.

"The woman is **half of the society** but because she is mother of the man she is **all the society.**"

A letter to those who are losing the will to live

Here in Palestine, suicide is haram. It is forbidden. This makes it very hard to talk about. But we are a group of counsellors meeting here at TRC and we want to talk about it. We want to assist others who are losing the will to live.

There are so many forces here that can lead to hopelessness. Sometimes people just think of ending their lives. Sometimes people actually try to kill themselves. Sometimes we lose them.

As counsellors, we meet with women and men, young people and older, who may be losing the will to live. One of us met with a group of eight young women and three of these young women had tried to kill themselves.

Sometimes people say to us that the reason they are alive is only that death has not come.

There are so many reasons here that make hopelessness strong.

Many of us are living under very difficult economic circumstances. This poverty can make it hard to live.

When relationships break down, when there is separation or family conflict, this brings loneliness and pain. And when you are lonely and in pain, life is so difficult.

What's more, if we feel we have failed in life, it can be hard to go on.

There are other conflicts too. If there is conflict between us and our spirituality, it can be very hard.

Here in Palestine, if there are unsanctioned sexual relationships, or if there is sexual abuse or sexual assault, this can be very hard to talk about. Sometimes sexual abuse or sexual assault can lead people to no longer know how to live.

And sometimes after unsanctioned relationships, suicide of women happens by the hand of relatives. Some women, if they do not kill themselves, are killed by family members.

It can be so hard to talk about suicide here in Palestine, because it is haram. But we want to be there for people who are losing the will to live. This is a letter from us counsellors meeting at the TRC, to anyone who is losing the will to live. We want to talk with you.







PART FIVE:

Closing

The following song, 'A powerful kindness' reflects the significance of the work of The Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture

A POWERFUL KINDNESS

The work of the TRC

Values human rights and dignity

It's a place of hope and strength

And a beautiful kindness

Listening to stories of grief
Of violence and brutality
They work with children, adults, families
Entire communities

There is an intellect in every breath

A strength and a healing politics

They're creating something so precious here

Letting freedom and futures reign

The work of the TRC

Values human rights and dignity

It's a place of hope and strength

And a powerful kindness

SOURCES

PART ONE

'These are our truths: Special knowledge of three Palestinian psychologists' was written from the words of TRC psychologists by David Denborough from an interview by Stephen Madigan.

'When trauma is not past' by Dr Mahmud Sehwail and 'The links between healing, psychotherapy and human rights' by Khader Rasras are extracts from longer pieces by Dr Mahmud Sehwail and Khader Rasras that were published in *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 2005*, Nos. 3 & 4.

PART TWO

The narrative therapy charter of storytelling rights was developed by David Denborough (2014)

The narrative practices of externalising problems, re-authoring conversations, re-membering conversations, and outsider-witness practices, were all developed by narrative therapists Michael White and David Epston. For descriptions of these practices see White (2007). See also: www.dulwichcentre.com.au

The stories of narrative practice featured in this section are from the work of Sahar Mustafa Ismael Mohammed. Please note that all names of clients in this handbook are pseudonyms.

The extract 'Re-membering conversations' by Maryam Burqan was first published in Hassounh et.al (2005).

Sue Mitchell's writings about 'Re-membering conversations with children' also appear in Mitchell (2013).

'Heckmut's list of prison skills' was written by David Denborough from the words of Heckmut.

The document 'Skills in keeping a family connected while your husband is in prison' was written by David Denborough from an interview conducted by Sawsan Mohammad Yusef Tabanja. For information about the rites of passage and the migration of identity' see White (1995).

The full version of Nihaya Abu-Rayyan's Seasons of life can be found at Abu-Rayyan (2009).

PART THREE

More information about the forms of collective narrative practice described in Part Three can be found in Denborough (2008).

The document 'Dealing with life under occupation: The special skills and knowledges that sustain the workers of Nablus' was created from the words of was created during a workshop on 'Narrative approaches to working with children' hosted by Medecins Du Monde in Nablus on the 21st and 22nd of June 2006. This training was offered by Angel Yuen and David Denborough under the auspices of Dulwich Centre.

The Tree of Life narrative approach was developed by Ncazelo Ncube (2006) and David Denborough. For more information see: www.dulwichcentre.com. au/tree-of-life.html

The document 'We remember our friends and family' was created by David Denborough from the words of participants in a group facilitated by Sahar Mustafa Ismael Mohammed and AkramMusbahSobeh Othman in Jenin.

For more information about the Team of Life narrative approach see: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/team-of-life.html

The Kite of Life was originally developed in Toronto (see Denborough, 2010). It was the idea of Thilaka Xavier during a project Oolagen Community Services, Turning Point Youth Services and Dulwich Centre Foundation International. The letter included in this handbook to the Tamil community in Toronto was written by Palestinian teachers and workers who attended a workshop by Cheryl White and David Denborough in Gaza City, hosted by the Remedial Education Center and made possible by Guido Veronese. Some photographs from this workshop are also included in this section.

PART FOUR

The documents 'To relate to women in our proper way: voices of Palestinian men', 'The journey of Palestinian women: Challenges and successes' and 'A letter to those who are losing the will to live' were created from the words of workers at the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture in Ramallah, Palestine, during workshops in 2011 and 2013.

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The overall project has been coordinated by Cheryl White, Khader Mahmud Ahmad Rasras, Dr Mahmud Sehwail and David Denborough.

David Denborough wrote the English draft of this handbook (drawing together the work of TRC therapists).

This handbook was translated by Nihaya Mahmoud Abu-Rayyan. Nihaya has also played a key role in translating workshops and in innovating Palestinian forms of narrative practice.

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This first Arabic handbook about narrative approaches to therapy, group work, and community work describes some of the key ideas and practices of narrative therapy and includes skilful and thoughtful examples of practice from Palestinian therapists.

This handbook consists of four parts. The first describes the broader context of the narrative therapy work of Palestinian counsellors. The second documents a number of key narrative therapy practices and includes examples of Palestinian practice. Part Three conveys how narrative ideas are being used with groups and communities. And Part Four describes how Palestinian counsellors are trying to open possibilities for conversations around very difficult topics.

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