

SUSTAINING HOPE

We are participants in a narrative therapy workshop in Perth, Australia. In this document we are pooling our knowledges and skills about sustaining hope as a way of supporting and learning from each other.

Valuing: Being in touch with those things we most value connects us to hope. For many of us this includes valuing people's uniqueness. One of us described this as appreciating the preciousness of others. For some of us it is important to value our own contributions to other people's lives.

Widening perspectives: We have a variety of ways of widening perspectives so that we can be open to other ways of seeing.

One of us grew up with parents who often disagreed. She learned to step away from conflict as a way of continuing with things important to her. One of us described stepping back and witnessing one's own actions, thoughts and feelings whilst remaining connected. Others found ways of remaining calm, taking time out. One of us described wondering what it is like for the other person. This came from his experiences of fatherhood. A belief that things change and challenges in life will pass is another way we widen our perspective. One of us learnt this through mothering; that even difficult situations might offer an opportunity to learn. It is always possible to reinvent ourselves. It can be stressful but always liberating. As well, many of us think humour is important so we don't take ourselves too seriously.

Commitment and passion: Many of us have important commitments and passions that guide our work and life. Several group members commented on their privileged position and expressed a commitment to share power. One of us is committed to sharing love of life, having witnessed women giving up on life after their children have left home. Another of us expressed commitment to persevere with people who others had given up on. She observed her mother as a determined woman holding her family together.

Stances: We prefer compassion, courage to not join in with practices of discouragement, the willingness to listen and an openness to not assuming. For some of us a spiritual stance is of special significance.

Many of us have practices of self care that ground us and enhance our resilience. We believe that people are the primary authors of their own stories and that we are there to help facilitate that.

Trust: We think that trusting ourselves and those we work with makes a difference rather than relying on theoretical ideas. One person said that there are times when it is okay to open up to trust so we can create an environment in which people feel safe.

Connecting: Many of us use playfulness, humour and creativity as a way of connecting. We strive to be open and responsive to others whether or not they ascribe to different ideas. Several of us find in times of difficulty and times of celebration we seek out our communities so we know who we are becoming and so that we may be inspired.

Remembering: Different members of the group hold onto a variety of experiences to sustain hope. We may hold on to memories, like feelings of being heard and acknowledged and memories of past initiatives. Many of us remember how we got through difficult times and in that way become our own guides in sustaining hope.

We hope that this will be a living document that people will feel free to add to and share with others.