

Experiential Exercise: Playing with Presence

Objective

To explore the ability to be present with ourselves and each other, enhancing intimacy and connection through experiential exercises that promote awareness, emotional expression, and relational dynamics.

To become more aware of what you are holding that may interrupt you from making contact with another person and your client.

To notice what it is like to be seen and to see another person.

To become aware of what interrupts you giving your full attention to another person and yourself.

Preparation

1. Find a Comfortable Space with your Dyad Partner:

- Choose a space in the main room to sit face-to-face with your dyad partner.
- Decide on the distance between you; this may change throughout the exercise, with moments when you want to move closer or further away.
- Ensure your feet are flat on the floor.
- Gather any resources you might need (e.g., water, blanket, sensory support).

This exercise will be largely non-verbal. However, you are invited and encouraged to lean into congruence, sharing and naming what is coming up for you. For example, “I notice my heart beating faster”, “I notice my breathing becoming shallower”, “I feel sadness coming up”. This is an opportunity to own your own experience, explore shared experiences when you are in an authentic connection, and explore transference and countertransference.

Music will be playing, and the exercise will be 15 minutes plus reflection and journaling.

Step 1: Exploring Presence in Pairs

• Eye Contact Practice:

- Begin by practising eye contact with your partner.
- Notice:
 - How it feels to hold eye contact.
 - Moments when you feel the need to break eye contact.

- Your emotional responses during this process.
- If eye contact is uncomfortable for you, that is ok. You can still experience connection and intimacy through your presence.
- **Awareness of Emotions:**
 - Pay attention to how your emotions change in response to the exercise.
 - Observe when emotions arise within you:
 - Where do you feel them?
 - Can you welcome or do you push them away?
 - What is it like to express your emotions to your partner?
 - Are they interrupting you feeling present
- **Observation and Reflection:**
 - What is it like to truly take in the person in front of you?
 - Reflect on the experience of being seen by another.
 - Note any judgments or assumptions that come up.
 - Consider your feelings of responsibility towards your partner:
 - Do you feel overwhelmed or underwhelmed?
 - Are you drawn to rescue your partner?
 - Can you hold space for your partner while managing your own emotions?
 - How do you feel while witnessing your partner?
 - Do you feel "felt"?

Step 2: Thanking Your Partner

- At the end of the exercise, find a meaningful way to thank your partner.
- Notice the type of contact you seek:
 - Be open to what feels comfortable and pay attention to what doesn't feel right.
- Emphasise honouring and respecting each other during this interaction.

Step 3: Journaling

- Take time to reflect on your experience by journaling:

- Write about your feelings, insights, and any significant moments from the exercise.
 - When you are finished, come back to your partner.
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Step 4: Sharing with Your Partner

- Reconnect with your partner for sharing.
 - Each partner will take 5 minutes to share their experiences using "I" statements (e.g., "I feel," "I think," "I imagine").
 - If you choose not to share, feel free to sit quietly instead, holding the space.
 - **Listener Role:**
 - As the listener, focus on witnessing your partner's experience.
 - Utilise non-verbal skills to show presence and support.
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