

Editorial

As counsellors, we may work from time to time with young people and adults who seem unusually gifted, or who have the potential to succeed beyond the norm and in more than one area of endeavour. Our clients may also include the parents of gifted and talented young people who have multiple interests and the potential to excel in multiple ways—parents who want to support their young people in making wise choices and managing the various interests and dreams that may pull them in multiple directions. In some schools, too, gifted and talented young people, and those with “multipotentiality,” may not be well identified or supported. Multipotentiality can be both a gift and a burden, and in the first article in this issue Nicola Hurst and Tracy Riley provide insights into the challenges these particularly talented young people may face. Based on a review of the literature, their article provides a broad understanding of the nature and effects of multipotentiality—knowledge that is vital to underpin the provision of effective emotional support and advocacy. The authors also recommend particular interventions and targeted counselling with multipotentially gifted and talented young people, as well as further local research to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach they recommend. While particularly relevant for school and career counsellors, this article may offer new insight to many readers.

The stories we tell ourselves can affirm or betray us. The next two articles address different ways in which we are affected by our engagement with our self-storying, as well as offering examples of the therapeutic use of writing and outsider-witnessing processes. In the first of these, “Acceptance with joy: Writing as a means of embodying compassion,” Bridget Scott and Elmarie Kotzé describe work that Bridget facilitated with three women, each of whom had distanced herself from problematic embodied relationships that were induced by eating disorders. The women were offered an opportunity to develop a more compassionate relationship with their bodies through participating in writing workshops, which were organised around five approaches: writing as reflective practice; poetry therapy; appreciative inquiry; outsider witnessing, and the use of rescued speech poetry in counselling. As the women read their stories to each other, listening as “outsiders,” their stories could be heard, and retold in

new ways. “Acceptance with joy” reflects the transformative and very moving power of these processes.

The following article recounts and reflects on an educative and research process that was also therapeutically powerful. Working with Elmarie Kotzé, Paula Money Penny deconstructed the story of a childhood experience in which she had a strong sense of personal failure. An outsider-witness process used by Elmarie enabled Paula to find new and liberating meanings embedded in her original story that freed her from its destructive power. Paula could then allow herself to bring other stories to the fore that created new opportunities for her. A variety of choices were made about interpreting Paula’s story, which became the first chapter of her autoethnographic research, ending with the application of Michael White’s eight steps of a failure conversation map that were used to shape a new lens to make alternative meaning of failure. In this article, Paula and Elmarie collaborated in revisiting the journey of the research, selecting and rewriting sections to, in their words, “make visible the possible presence of ‘failure’ identity stories in learning and counselling journeys.”

In the fourth article in this issue, “Recognition, regulation, registration: Seeking the right touch,” Alastair Crocket makes a further contribution to the ongoing discussion about the future of our profession in the current political environment and the continuing uncertainty about whether counselling will become a state-regulated profession (see also the articles by Alastair Crocket and Keith Tudor in the previous issue). Alastair identifies and discusses three possible alternative directions: state regulation; maintaining NZAC’s current situation as a self-managing organisation, or a self-regulation approach with a measure of state approval. He argues that a pragmatic approach is needed in deciding on the most viable direction to pursue, given the pervasive influence of government policy on the likely outcomes.

The final article in this issue also echoes another theme from Alastair Crocket’s article in the previous issue, where he argued for the vital relationship between research and practice, and the urgent need to produce practice-based research evidence. Here, Ruth McConnell discusses the challenges of teaching research methods to undergraduate counselling students and finding ways of capturing their engagement and motivation. Research demonstrates that practitioners are often anxious about the requirement that they take research methods courses, lack confidence in this area, and see little relevance in this aspect of their programme when their own primary focus is on developing their skills in counselling practice. Yet, engagement with research is recognised as an important aspect of developing reflective practitioners who both use

research in their practice and also contribute to the body of knowledge that underpins effective practice. The “evocative approach” Ruth employs when teaching a research methods course in the context of a Christian college is designed to engage students by enabling them to relate to research on a level that is personally meaningful, and enhances their motivation. The results of a survey exploring the questions that counselling students bring to their engagement with research are presented, and recommendations are offered for teaching research methods courses in undergraduate counselling programmes.

We encourage readers to respond to the perspectives represented and the voices that have found expression through these articles, and to consider contributing to the conversations we aim to promote, to help build a dynamic, two-way relationship between research and practice.

Philip Culbertson and Margaret Agee