

**LEARNING HOW TO BE STILL:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reflects upon a research journey which was motivated by the author's personal desire to become more self-aware and be more connected and balanced in body, mind and spirit; and by her professional ambition to provide a more productive space for clients seeking adult guidance and for adult students returning to education, that would welcome and promote all parts of their selves and their narratives.

A narrative inquiry approach was taken to the research which focuses on the relevance of recognising all aspects of self – body, mind and spirit; on exploring and experimenting with Mindfulness and Mindfulness practices; on the reflexive potential of Personal Journaling as a tool for learning, recording and researching; and on the power of narrative and storytelling.

The thesis will be of interest to anyone passionate about self-development, professional development and self-awareness; and any caring professional, adult guidance counsellor, or educator, interested in developing tools to use with clients and learners to enhance their self-awareness as individuals and help them create more meaningful connections with their learning.

LEARNING HOW TO BE STILL

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INTRODUCTION

I write this inquiry from a place of confusion, born out of a sense of deep unknowing and physical pain. At times in the last 3 years I felt I had found a path that would lead me to an inner and outer sense of fulfilment. These paths and tracks have taken me to new, yet unfulfilled places. Some simply fell away before me, leaving me lost, confused and searching. Searching for my 'self'; for a purpose that will bring happiness, joy, challenges and fulfilment; searching for a lost connectiveness between my body, spirit, mind, emotions, and the people and world around me, and within me.

This thesis follows a quest for knowing. Specifically it looks to inform the author, and hence the reader, of methods and practices that may facilitate one to connect with their inner, and often lost or forgotten, knowledge, sense of wholeness, and being. The author examines whether these methods and practices can promote personal and professional well-being. 'Well-being is realizing one's unique potential through physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development...in relation to self, others and the environment'. (O'Toole & Kropf, 2010:28)

The research methods employed are mainly qualitative (naturalist, interpretivist) with emphasis on subjective experience and reflection. They include storytelling and narrative, mindfulness (being present to our inner and outer experiences in the moment) and mindfulness practices, and personal journaling (reflective writing).

Qualitative researching is exciting and important. It is a highly rewarding activity because it engages us with things that matter, in a way that matter...using methodologies that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity. (Mason, 2002:1)

Other mediums such as song writing, poetry, art and drawings, are used as well as writing to illustrate the life experience of the author and others.

In the context of social reform Eisner (e.g. 1991/1998) also argued that successful researchers in the new social science genre require a different kind of skill base..."Art, music, dance, prose, and poetry are some of the forms that have been invented to perform this function" (p. 235). (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:683)

The methods used to explore the areas of Mindfulness, Journaling and Storytelling belong to the world of narrative inquiry and action research. Narrative inquiry is ‘an experience of the experience. It is people in relation studying with people in relation’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:189) Similarly, action research is ‘practitioner based research’ and ‘a form of self-reflective practice’. (McNiff, 2002:6) Methods utilised included researching published material; journaling throughout the process of the research piece; experimental experiential learning - through becoming part of a Mindfulness Training Group and by part-taking in a European Deepening Seminar on Well-being; experimenting with different meditative practices on my own; and conducting 5 narrative interviews (loosely structured format with many open-ended questions, with focus on the interviewee’s story). I also engaged with a psychotherapist, a college supervisor and had the support of my college class group and my college thesis group.

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question...a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:5)

The methods were chosen for their meaning making processes and respect for the human condition, which is beautiful, delicate, flawed, fallible, constantly changing, full of potential and utterly subjective. “The way you choose to collect data is illustrative of your beliefs about knowledge and human experience”. (Ryan et al., 2006:74) A more detailed account of the methods employed will be given throughout the thesis.

MY VIEW OF THE WORLD AND OF RESEARCH

I took a post-positivist approach which moves away from the concept of ‘one truth’ and scientific ‘objectivity’; social constructionist approach, ‘the idea that facts are not discovered but socially produced’ (Abercrombie et al, 2006:353); phenomenological approach, which focuses on the individual and ‘takes as its main aim the analysis and description of everyday life’ (Abercrombie et al, 2006:291); and narrative (story) approach to the doing of this research. I believe from my life experience and from my learning that humans socially construct their reality and that these constructions of life are constantly changing, being reviewed, added to, and ‘becoming’. I believe narrative is the perfect example of how we construct our past, present and futures. ‘...if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:17)

I am attracted to the above paradigms, ‘sets of standards to which practitioners can always refer’, because of their focus on stories, on the individual and the unique contexts that individual’s live and perceive their world from within. (Kuhn in Oakley, 2000: 27) The subjective, narrative approach I have taken allows for the infinite truths that humans can experience and facilitates life stories to be told without the confines of a researcher’s vain quest for pure objectivity. ‘In narrative inquiry, it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:62) It also hands power to the reader to decide what is, and is not, relevant to their lives, development, values and beliefs, ‘it frees us from trying to write a single text in which we say everything at once to everyone’. (Richardson, 2000:929)

To explain my ontological stance more clearly, the position I stood within when embarking on this year (September 2010), I need to explain the two sides of me, ‘the Believer’ and ‘the Protector’.

My view of the world – ‘the Believer’ and ‘the Protector’

Through all the experiences I have had over the last few years, especially since 2006 – in particular, meeting and loving John (my now husband); visiting a healer; participating in a 14 month Life Coaching Diploma Course; completing a 2 year Higher Diploma in Adult Guidance and Counselling; and now engaging in a Masters in Adult Guidance and Counselling - I discovered I have 2 distinct and conflicting ways of reacting to the world. One is ‘the Believer’, who believes in all and everything, and the other is ‘the Protector’ who believes in very little except myself (and wavers on this at times) and who ‘knows’ faith and belief ends in regret and mistrust. I am constantly being pulled between these 2 ways of being and perceiving. ‘We, and our participants, live and tell many stories. We are all characters with multiple plotlines who speak from within these multiple plotlines’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:147)

The conflict between these 2 parts of me really shone through when I was asked to establish my ‘World View’ as part of a college exercise in February 2011. This exercise was to help us (my Masters group) establish the unique platform from which we were conducting and writing up our Master’s research.

The following is part of the reflection that took place on trying to establish ‘My View of the World’.

This has been, and continues to be, a very confusing process. My view, it would seem, is full of contradictions.

On one hand, I have held on hard to child-like characteristics which I have pride in. I believe in goodness; I automatically veer towards trusting strangers; I tend to believe what people say and do. I trust that this world will never hurt me too badly and that there is opportunity for growth and personal learning in all hard situations. I trust that I am essentially a good person who can bring joy to the lives of others especially those that I love. I am also open to the possibility that there is a ‘God’, some form of Higher Power that connects us all. ‘Naive’ is a word that could, and has, been used to describe me; also perhaps ‘hopeful’ and ‘positive’.

But...I have another side to me which also influences my outlook on life. This part doubts the endlessness of love, the existence of a Higher Power. This part wonders if anything that I or others do has any real significance. This part ‘knows’, that we all live and die and that humans are complex animals with egos who like to invent scenarios to make us feel important and part of something bigger than our own brief time in life. This part of me contains the experiences and memories of an adult and professional who has foolishly sought out heroes to be in awe of, and has watched these false heroes fall, leaving no-one standing, including myself. This part of me has watched belief and trust be used to punish, and doubts the existence of a true altruistic act.

... I view the world from a place of confusion, hurt and hope.

(Bates, In-class ‘Focused Free Writing’:12.2.11)

It is the story of these 2 parts that plays out in this thesis which is a search for a greater connection with self and with the universe at large and all that encompasses. Accompanying the search is ‘the Believer’ who wants to be part of something bigger than simply my physical form, my thoughts and feelings; and then there is ‘the Protector’ who is waiting for the inevitable disappointment and abandonment of this misguided search.

My view on research

While establishing my world view, I examined how I view research through my own unique and conflicted lens.

...with relevance to research, I see people as unique individuals and I operate in an inner and outer world of story-telling. I remember things in story form. I'm eternally going over and reconstructing past stories and imagining present and future stories; events that will happen to me in my life; the thoughts I will have; the feelings I will feel. My life, I believe, is in essence a story being played out which I share with other characters, some minor, others major. I believe everybody's story is different even if people share the same context for their stories. I believe there is no one true truth, but many different coloured truths, each as valid as the next. I believe searching for one, common, truth is a vain mission and in order to be a good researcher and effective Adult Guidance Counsellor or Educator, one must allow all truths be heard, re-told, re-constructed and new truths/stories to be authored.

(Bates, Personal Journal:16.3.11)

“Life is pregnant with stories. It is a nascent plot in search of a midwife”. (Kearny, 2002:130)

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEWEES

5 narrative interviews were conducted with 5 specifically chosen people. It is important to introduce the interviewees to the reader at this point as their stories, through the use of interview quotes, are positioned throughout the thesis.

All interviews were recorded on Dictaphone, transcribed and coded thematically. All interviewees consented after receiving the transcripts to be named within the thesis.

The first interview was conducted in March 2011 with Nicola (30's, Irish), a person I have known for 13 years, who at the time of the interview was unemployed and engaged in a part-time art course. Nicola had worked in the past in various cafes and as a complementary therapist. She was asked to be the 'pilot' interview as I knew she had some experience of mindfulness and journaling. However, as the interview progressed it was evident that the richness and depth of information being produced should be included in the thesis – and so with Nicola's consent she became the first official interviewee.

The second interview, also conducted in March 2011 was with my father, Gerry (60, Irish), who is a newly retired secondary school teacher and who is presently engaged in various community activities included facilitating retreats for young adults. Before teaching, Gerry had spent time in a seminary in preparation for becoming a priest. He decided to leave before taking his final vows (luckily for me, his daughter). Gerry was a pivotal, initial source of guidance for me around using mindfulness techniques.

The third interview, conducted in mid-March 2011 was with David (40's, Irish), who was my lecturer and thesis supervisor for the 2 years I was doing a Diploma in Adult Guidance and Counselling (Sept 2008 - May 2010). David is a university lecturer, a psychotherapist and has been a secondary school teacher. David was the 'teacher' who introduced me to the world of narrative research. He also frequently used mindfulness and journaling practices with his students.

For many, many years...the only model of learning and knowledge and of research that was available were the, you know, that kind of pseudoscientific, impersonal, disembodied, (yeah) version of knowledge. And yet, the more I spoke to people, the more I realised that how much resided in the stories we tell... but it was difficult to find a way for that, to become research (yeah), because the, it seemed like the models that were there, you know, they weren't reflexive, they were impersonal, they were disconnected, disembodied. So, I suppose it just took a long, long time to realise that there are people out there who are doing, who are developing approaches to research, that honour the things I wanted to be honoured.

(Interview with David, 22.3.11:144)

The fourth interview was conducted with Luis (30, Portuguese), an international educator and trainer, the Communications Manager for EPTO – European Peer Training Organisation, and a member of the 'Learning for Well-being' Movement. I met and interviewed Luis in late March 2011 at a 'Learning for Well-being' Deepening Seminar in France. I was immediately drawn to his ability to verbalise what was going on within him and around him. Luis also had vast experience of engaging in, and experimenting with, various mindfulness and journaling techniques.

The fifth and last interview was conducted in April 2011, via Skype, with Linda (60's, American), an information processing and learning researcher and writer. Linda was one of the early researchers and shapers of 'Human Dynamics,' and elaborated these understandings in the 'Learning for Well-being' Movement.

Linda designed the sessions, and was lead facilitator, at the French Deepening Seminar. She has experience with many forms of mindfulness practices and has also journaled at different times throughout her life.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

‘Adults educate themselves through attempts to challenge the rules rather than to follow them’. (Dominice, 2000:70)

This thesis does not take on the traditional structure of Introduction, Methodology Chapter, Literature review, Findings Chapter, Analysis Chapter and Conclusion, but rather takes a narrative approach to the structure. It is a narrative from beginning to end, just as the experience of living it was. The narratives of the author, the 5 people interviewed, other writers, and scientific and research experts, are all interwoven throughout the thesis. ‘Van Maanen therefore advocates the explicit use of narrative to communicate the whole process of research to an audience’. (Elliott, 2005:165)

The structure is theme lead with an-

Introduction: Introduces areas of focus for the thesis and research methods employed

History Chapter: Introduces the reader to the author’s history in order to establish the personal and professional motivation for conducting this piece of research

Mindfulness Chapter: Focuses on literature, and the life experiences of the author and research interviewees in relation to Mindfulness and Mindfulness Practices

Journaling Chapter: Focuses on literature, and the life experiences of the author and research interviewees in relation to personal journaling.

Narrative Inquiry Chapter: Focuses on the experiences of the author and the research interviewees in employing narrative and storytelling techniques; and the experience of both researcher and research interviewees of the narrative interviews.

Relevance of Inquiry: This chapter expresses the relevance of this inquiry in relation to therapeutic work, adult guidance and counselling, adult education and Ireland today. It also places the inquiry within an a wider global context.

Conclusion: A space for the author to reflect on the overall experience of the research process; to summarise the key learnings for the author; and to suggest future related areas of research.

HISTORY CHAPTER

‘Life and livelihood ought not to be separated but to flow from the same source, which is the spirit’. (Fox, 1994 in Hansen, 2008:7)

The following chapter allows the reader an insight into the past experiences of the author, explaining the motivation behind this inquiry into mindfulness, journaling and narrative approaches to research. Interestingly, many of the author’s experiences are mirrored in the life stories of the interviewees.

THE BEGINNING OF THIS STORY

2006 – August 2010

Longing for space – Teachers and Learning

I have had a longing on me for some time to create space for myself to become more in touch with all the parts of me – the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual - and to experiment with different methods and read more on all the interesting things that have crossed my path in recent years, such as meditation, mindfulness, the power of personal writing, Reiki, Yoga, the law of Attraction...the list goes on. I am attracted to, intrigued by, and also very suspicious of these potential life changing discoveries. These practices and ways of viewing the world have come into my consciousness through a number of key experiences and various ‘teachers’ (people who opened me up to new realisations, awareness’s and learning).

I’ve had many close relationships in my life, or people that have really mattered deeply to me. And, and I, you know, I include those people who are friends or lovers or husbands in the, in, you know, group that I would call teachers.

(Interview with Linda, 11.4.11:53)

The most precious teacher to cross my path is, and has been, my now husband (we met in 2006). He is someone who has a deep belief in a universal energy that connects us all. “I know that my relationship with John would have moved me on in my personal development and in my understanding of the world hugely”. (Sarah in Interview with Linda, 11.4.11:71)

I worked full-time as an adult guidance counsellor with people on probation across 2 counties from September 2007 - August 2010. Also during this time I engaged in some amazingly, transformative part-time adult education and training settings, the first being a Life Coaching Diploma course from January 2007 to March 2008.

This course greatly opened my eyes to the power of the mind and body and challenged me about how well I really knew myself and whether I was in a work area that met my personal needs and potential.

I spent 2 years on the Maynooth Higher Diploma course in Adult Guidance and Counselling (September 2008 – June 2010). This course, and the people I encountered through it, introduced me to hidden parts of myself, new possibilities for myself and the power of narrative. This year, my Masters year (September 2010 – June 2011) is a continuation of this journey, which has brought me to deeper depths within myself and within my understanding of the world and everything in it.

Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2006:26)

Back Problems

During the summer of 2009, while between 1st and 2nd year on the Higher Diploma course, I woke up one morning in June and was unable to get out of the bed. My back was in terrible pain and any movement was excruciating. I was ‘diagnosed’ as having a pulled ligament in my lower back which would take time to heal. I took a week and a half off work and believed the pain that continued was part of the healing process and that I was not damaging myself further by working with the injury.

I took another week off in July when the pain and stiffness became unbearable. During the year that followed, I at times cancelled client appointments when I felt unable to drive and I would instead work from home and occasionally took a few days off, normally after a back adjustment.

SEEKING HEALING

Mia

Over the past few years since 2007 I have visited a ‘healer’ for various lengths of time. She has had a big impact on my life, in particular my energy and health levels.

Going for healing would be, would be the biggest thing (form of self-care) for me.
(Interview with Nicola, 11.3.11;105)

Mia, at the time of the back injury (which had no apparent cause), told me that my back would not heal until I stopped working in front line social care positions. She believed the injury was caused by a build up of fear and emotional ‘baggage’ being carried around in my body. She felt I was too vulnerable for the ‘frontline’ work I had been doing for many years, that I carried the hurts of this work with me, and that I needed to be doing something more creative. She strongly believed my spirit (‘the principle of conscious life; the vital principle in humans, animating the body or mediating between body and soul’) expressed itself creatively and that I was not allowing this expression and connection, and that my work was a large barrier to my own healing, connection and creative energy. (Dictionary.com, 30.5.11)

Up until my late 20’s I had been very happy viewing myself as a carer and making a career out of this identity. I was very good at the jobs I had but I struggled greatly with work-life balance and more often than not took my work home with me, literally in the form of an on-call mobile, and emotionally in the sense that I carried my clients and their problems around in my head and my heart regardless of where I was.
(Bates, 2010:22)

Expressing ‘hurt’ creatively

I have been singing and writing songs for 13 years but have never taken my music very seriously. Mia believed my spirit shone through my music strongly encouraged me to move into music as a career.

At times the people I met through my work filled me with great sadness and my release was to write and sing about them, and the impact they had on me. Song writing has been a form of personal journaling that has been very effective and very natural in my life.

I wrote stories. I wrote poems. I write whenever I feel very overwhelmed with emotion that I need to put it on paper somehow. (Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:173)

*Why can't you cry, when your babies can't find their way home?
 Why don't you cry, when your babies are missing from their beds?
 And how do you breathe when he's knocked all the air out of you?
 How do you breathe, with his weight bearing down on you?
 Is it any wonder that you're always in despair.
 You're in despair.
 ... And I'll ask you to raise your head, face another day.
 I'll tell you to raise the bar, live another way...
 What do I know? What do I know?
 ... I'm in despair.*

(Extract from 'Behind Every Smile', Song lyrics, Bates:2006)
 - Full lyrics in Appendix 1

I listened to Mia's advice but had faith that my back would heal in time and deep down I questioned the real wisdom and knowledge of what she was telling me. I was also terrified of giving up a permanent full-time job in favour of being creative and becoming a full-time musician, so I continued on working, in pain.

Barbara Ann Brennan (1987) is a practicing healer, psychotherapist and scientist (with NASA) who has done extensive research into working with, and healing through, the human energy field. She writes

From the perspective of a healer, illness is the result of imbalance. Imbalance is a result of forgetting who you are. Forgetting who you are creates thoughts and actions that lead to an unhealthy lifestyle and eventually illness. (Brennan, 1987;131)

The process of healing is really a process of remembering - remembering who you are. (Brennan, 1987;131)

Tim

In January 2010 I got a severe pain in my finger which spread to my shoulder and within 3 days I was 'back' to where I had started in June'09. I distrusted the original diagnosis I had been given and went to see Tim, a 'Remedial Gymnast' (an old profession that incorporates chiropody and physiotherapy). Tim took one look at me and diagnosed a 'slipped disc' (A disc in my lower back was protruding). He proceeded to put the disc back in place and also adjusted many parts of my back – it turned out I had very old 'injuries', including several dislocated ribs. At one point during the session he warned me he was about to adjust a small bone which is associated with depression and that it may bring on some emotions.

Sarah Bates, 'Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry'. 2011.

I was surprised by this as I had suffered from what I would call ‘real depression’ (feeling numb, disconnected from everything and everybody) twice, as a teenager and again when I was 23. But I also suffered from what could be described as mild depression - I had low energy all the time and had bouts of apathy, which were part of the normal course of life for me, and which I had never really taken any notice of before I started seeing Mia. On my first visit with her in 2007, she had explained that my energy was not flowing due to a pile-up of fear and unresolved, unacknowledged emotions and bodily experiences. I was intrigued to think that an emotional or mental state could be related to a bone that was out of place in my back – Mia would believe that bones can be pushed out of place by the accumulation of emotional and spiritual blocks or ‘baggage’ within the body.

Depression is a disorder of the body as much as of the mind...depression leaves footprints on the bodies structure...The pain is often vague and unexplained by injury. It may show up as headache, abdominal pain, or musculoskeletal pains in the lower back, joints and neck—alone or in any combination. (Estroff Marano, July 2002)

When Tim adjusted this little bone I felt this surge of emotion come up from deep within my stomach and get caught in my throat. I felt I couldn’t breathe. Tim sat me up and helped me release the emotion which came out in long lasting sobs. I could feel the emotion as a physical activity without really connecting to it on an emotional level. I sat in embarrassment as my body unashamedly sobbed and released in front of this relatively unknown man.

The experience of that first session had not been painful in a physical sense. It had however left me displaying very physical emotion. I left Tim’s house feeling taller and freer in my body than I ever had before and with a strong sense of hope that my back would get better.

I walked to the car where my husband was waiting for me, got in, and proceeded to sob for about half an hour, unable to speak.

The following day, after the immense after-pain and swelling of the adjustment had surfaced, I went to Frankfurt on a 3 night break, unable to let down a friend who was depending on my going. I had never been one to put my body and it’s needs first, so I had a painful 4 day ‘holiday’ filled with painkillers, anti-inflammatories, flying, bus trips, snowy walks and rainy sightseeing. When I returned home I went back to work.

...doing work, I was really disrespectful of my hunger, for instance. I could go on for hours without eating, or without sleeping and that had an impact. But I was so, you know, in my head that I didn't even pay attention to what the body was telling me.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:68)

That is a constant struggle to stay present and in my body...I don't always know whether I'm hungry or sick.

(Interview with Linda, 11.4.11:154)

Within 2 weeks I was back with Tim as the disc has slipped out again. The disc would never stay in place for more than 5 days after an adjustment and my body would slowly disintegrate between sessions with Tim until I returned for another session.

Time went on, the disc problem became part of my life, it failed to heal and Mia reminded me on the odd occasion when I visited her that the back would not heal until I put myself, all of myself including my body, first; leave work; and pursued a more creative path. During my sessions with her we would work on releasing the fear that was keeping me stuck in my current (secure) way of living and job; and on trying to create a greater connection between the part of me that I was aware of (my thoughts and feelings) and the more fundamental part of myself (my spirit, my soul – ‘the spiritual part of humans as distinct from the physical part’, the unchangeable core of my ‘being’) which I seemed very detached from. (Dictionary.com, 30.5.11) I had a growing sense that there was more to ‘me’ than what I could then connect with and it is this search that has lead me to this particular thesis and area of inquiry: re-searching for what ‘the Believer’ in me believes I came into this world with - a spirit that was uniquely me and connected to everything else in our world, seen and unseen, acknowledged and unacknowledged. ‘Research with soul in mind is *re*-search, a searching *again*, for something that has already made its claim upon us, something we have already known, however dimly, but have forgotten’. (Romanyshyan, 2007:4)

This re-search is not for religion, or ‘God’, but for a deeper sense of self, a sense of holistic connection and well-being.

Some resistance to the spiritual perspective appears to be due to its being perceived as synonymous with religion. Although spirituality is expressed in religion, as well as philosophy and culture, it transcends ideologies, rituals, dogma and institutions.

(Sermabeikian, 1994:180)

Language

Language and in particular words such as ‘soul’, ‘spirit’, ‘well-being’, are so open to interpretation and will resonate differently with different people. This struggle with language is common when dealing with ‘research with soul in mind’.

How does one find the words to bridge the gap between soul and its epiphanies...how to square the language of explanation with the dream-energized language of being. Something is always left out, something is always missing, and what is missing haunts the concepts and ideas we bring to clothe these epiphanies.

(Romanyshyan, 2007:309)

This difficulty with using language as a medium of expression was also echoed in the narrative interviews. I often established which words people were comfortable with for different concepts, such as being ‘present’ through mindfulness - Gerry preferred ‘awareness’. The interviewees themselves struggled to find language that would communicate fully what they were trying to convey.

well I know what it is that I do but it just doesn't have a label on it. (Yeah) And it seems like, you know, that's kind of all of the work that I've ever done has been a little like that is that it doesn't have an easy way of talking about.

(Interview with Linda, 11.4.11:135)

Illness – a shared narrative

It is essential that we deal with the deeper meaning of our illnesses. We need to ask, what does this illness mean to me? What can I learn from this illness? Illness can be seen as simply a message from your body to you that says, ‘Wait a minute; something is wrong. You are not listening to your whole self; you are ignoring something very important to you. What is it?’ (Brennan, 1987;7)

As I have said, there have been key people and experiences that have lead me to this path of exploration and ironically the back pain has been hugely influential in creating the motivation for seeking out other ways of being.

I was intrigued that each of the 5 interviewees could pinpoint events that at the time were overwhelming and tragic, but which led to them seek out new practices and ways of being, which led to greater levels of well-being and self-awareness.

Sarah Bates, ‘Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry’. 2011.

I am 10 years into my recovery from Anorexia...You made a link between how I said I was "forced into" self-care and the difference in my wellbeing from not caring for myself which was leading me towards death to consciously starting my days positively in trying to care for myself. There was huge realisation for me in this.

(Post-interview Follow-up Questionnaire – Nicola, 17.5.11)

It was suffering that first brought me in contact with all of this exploration. I had a traumatic car accident in 1983 that marked my future in all sorts of ways... I doubt if my writing, stillness or well being practices would exist as they do today without that trauma.

(Post-interview Follow-up Questionnaire – David, 12.5.11)

...as I got older, patterns of feeling quite down at times. And I suppose that, in some ways, that was negative, in other ways I think it deepened me as well. And, part of it would have led me to, to kind of practices of relaxation, when I'd feel I'm anxious or down and sometimes they helped and sometimes they didn't.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:31)

I off balance and I was overloaded, then the judgement would be very heavy, you know, and very destructive, (yeah) inside myself and towards the people I was working with. (Yeah) And I was no longer able to be compassionate towards people, I was becoming cynical, you know. And everything was much more demonstrative...I'm not doing my job well and I'm not doing myself well. So I need a pause, I need a pause from this kind of work. So I think, it was when the, yeah, that weight of judgement and this acid attitude was, caused the situation that made me feel that way, 'I can't do this anymore'.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:48)

There actually were only a couple of times that, that I really felt the pain of him [Tom, Linda's husband who died], you know, of us not being connected in the same way...it's like having one of your senses removed. But the overwhelming experience with him was the connection that continued on. And, and that didn't stop and it doesn't stop, it still goes/... I made the choice that I was going to carry on and do what I needed to do. Didn't know how I was going to do it because it was such a big hole in my life.

(Interview with Linda, 11.4.11:76/78)

Creating space

At the end of August 2010, after a year of pain and a growing sense of apathy and unhappiness towards my life, I finally found the strength and self-love to give up my full-time position as an Adult Guidance Counsellor in order to take time to look after myself physically, and to experiment with what else I might 'be', personally and professionally.

I quit my relationship, I quit my job, I changed my house, I, and I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do with my life. (Yeah) It was like a new start.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:50)

It was not the job position that I, or Luis, held that was the ‘problem’; it was how we were dealing with our jobs and our work-life imbalance. Ironically both of us are back in similar job roles, but we have created roles that better reflect our values and that allow us the time and space to express ourselves creatively through our roles.

I believe that the healing and releasing work that I had been doing with Mia prior to August 2010, had given me the courage to take a huge risk and leave full-time employment. The thesis I completed for my Higher Diploma which ended in May 2010 also greatly influenced my decision that it was time to see what I could do with my life in a creative sense. By studying Adult Guidance and Counselling, I learnt that people (including myself and my clients) can have many career paths which have the potential to fulfill them at different times in their lives. It was my time to see what else I could be, as well as a professional carer. The Masters was the ideal supportive place from which to inquire into the different dimensions of myself and experiment with various practices that may promote increased self-awareness and well-being, which I believed, and still believe, will bring me to new career options and a broader professional identity.

In particular my Mother’s comments both surprised and empowered me, ‘My feeling is that you should not be a carer. I did not want you to be destined for caring...I feel I really want to take you out of your work and surround you with music, colour, nature, creativity and time’. (Extract from ‘Parents Feedback’ – H.Dip Thesis, 8/6/10)

MINDFULNESS & MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:ix)

AWARENESS OF LIFE

It was a story that inspired my search for a more mindful way of living - to learn to live in the present moment, not looking back at the past or to the future. At the end of January 2010 I was in pain, in Frankfurt, and reading a book by Paulo Coelho entitled 'Veronika Decides to Die' (1998), a powerful story based on a real lady called Veronika.

In the book a young girl, having experienced a prolonged state of complete apathy, decides to commit suicide but is found before she dies. She is brought to a mental institution where she is told she has done irreparable damage to her heart and it is only a matter of days before she will get her wish and die. However, when every minute could be her last she discovers the beauty in everything around her and starts to live in the present moment, which brings with it joy, hope, potential and a wish to live. Her doctor in the final chapter makes notes on how to cure someone who doesn't care if they live or die, 'the only known cure...an awareness of life. And describing the medication he had used...an awareness of death'. (Coelho, 1998:189) I longed to learn how to live my life in the moment and it wasn't until that summer that I realised 'Mindfulness' and 'the Art of Mindful Living' was what I was looking to develop.

'...all I have is the present, and a very brief one too it seems.' (Veronika)

'That's all anyone has, and it's always very brief.' (Sufi master)

(Coelho, 1998:90)

The time and space to learn about, and engage in, mindfulness practices arrived in September 2010 after finishing full-time work.

PAIN – A MAJOR CHARACTER IN THE PLOTLINE

After leaving work at the end of August 2010, I fully expected my back to heal quickly, to start putting energy into my music ‘career’, and to enjoy my Masters year. However, by mid-September, I was in extreme daily pain, unable to stand up straight, and had developed severe sciatica down my legs, my left leg in particular. Adjustments from Tim were having little impact on my back and no impact on the sciatica and he and Mia warned that this could be a time when my body would release all it had been holding over the years when I had been busy concentrating on work. ‘Our chronic aches and pains get our attention when nothing more pressing takes it away’. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:82) My longing for freedom turned into a painful prison within my body and my home. I was unable physically to walk without extreme pain or to play music. I quickly lost faith in my vision of a creative future and as the pain persisted, my tolerance, energy and hope decreased daily.

Trying to remember why I gave up so much, why I created this space...

Trying to remember where I lost my faith, ‘cause I can’t feel it no more.

(Extract from ‘Remember’, Song lyrics, Bates, Oct 2010)

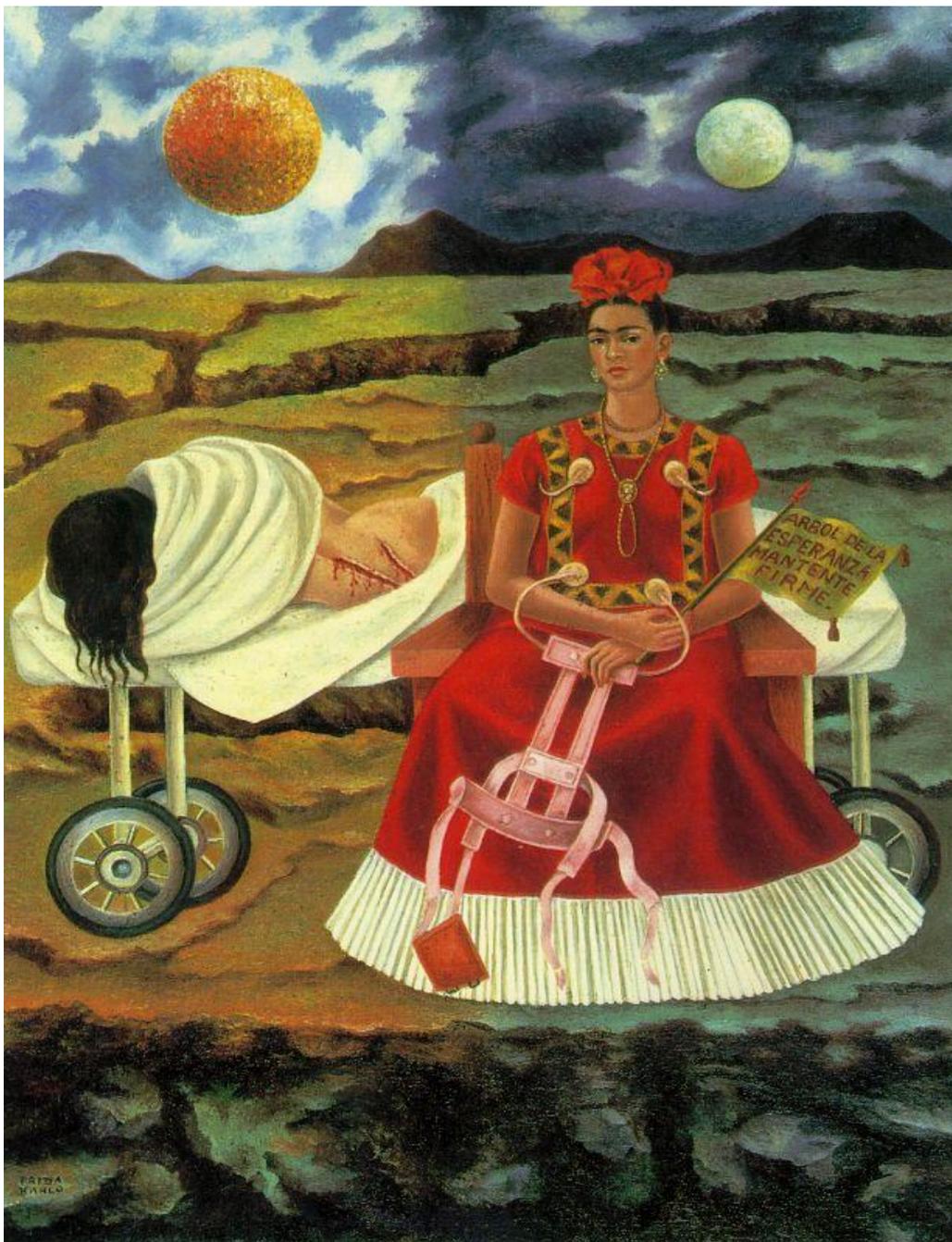
- Full lyrics in appendix 2

I became quite depressed, and it feels overly dramatic describing it now, but I had days where I cried a lot and felt I couldn’t go on living a life that involved daily prolonged pain. I couldn’t see an end to this period in my life and I was terrified that my back and the related problems and pain would only get worse the older I got. I had a constant battle going on within myself - between ‘the Believer’ who hoped it was all part of the healing process, that it would get worse before getting better; and ‘the Protector’ that was trying to come to terms with the painful future that lay ahead.

Although I had been ‘experimenting’ with seeing a spiritual healer over the previous 3 years I didn’t have faith in a ‘God’. I had more a sense of a universal energy that surrounded us all and that may be used to heal. Yet I found myself praying to a God I wasn’t sure existed, begging him to take away my back problems while I slept. “I don’t believe in you, God, but please, help me”. (‘Mari’ – Coelho, 1998:109)

You may feel angry about the pain (feeling). You may believe that it is monolithic – something huge, all encompassing, and unchangeable (a concept about pain). When you perceive pain this way it quickly becomes unbearable.

(Smalley & Winston, 2010:87)



'Tree of Hope' (1946), painted by Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo de Rivera (July 6, 1907 – July 13, 1954) was a Mexican painter who is remembered for the pain, passion and intensity of colour in her paintings. As a young girl she survived polio and went on to enter a pre-med programme in Mexico City. When she was 18 she was knocked down by a car which left her crippled and unable to have children. She underwent over 30 operations in her life. When asked why she painted so many self-portraits, she said, "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."

Sarah Bates, 'Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry'. 2011.

In the midst of this period from September to December 2010, I started seeing an acupuncturist, Pat, in the hopes that he could alleviate the sciatica which was immune to pain killers. Pat told me I would be pain free in 2 months (from the sciatica at least) and if my body was out of place (the protruding disc), my body would adapt, or would heal itself without manipulation. I placed my hopes on his words but I never really believed he could cure my pain...and the battle between ‘the Believer’ and ‘the Protector’ continued.

RESISTANCE

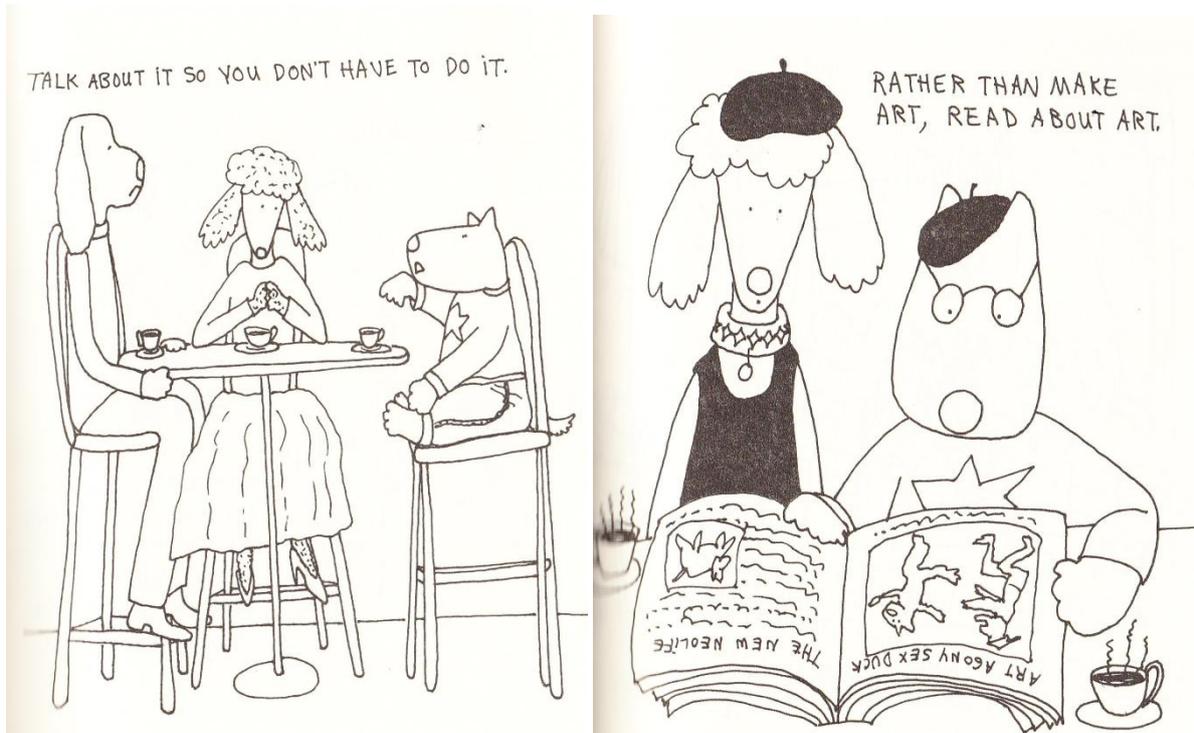
During this time (September – December 2010) I attempted to educate myself about mindfulness and mindfulness practices; and to journal my experiences, thoughts and feelings. This was motivated by the hope it would help with the healing process, but the more pressing motivation was the need to gather information for the Thesis - which I had decided to do on Mindfulness, Journaling and Narrative, as it seemed fitting to what I was experiencing...and I could do very little else due to my physical incapacity.

I started by listening to recorded sessions (as I didn’t have the concentration to read) of Thich Nhat Hanh, ‘Mindfulness & Psychotherapy’, (1998). I loved his way of explaining his simple, yet hard to retain and digest, view of life and way of living. I struggled greatly to do more than just listen to the cds. ‘Pain can block new learning, even though it provides the reason for new learning’. (Bates, Personal Journal, 10.1.11) I stopped seeing Mia because I had lost my faith in her and in my body, ‘the Protector’ was at her loudest. I was talking about mindfulness and journaling, ordering books, making plans, but finding it impossible to actually engage in mindfulness practices or keep a journal.

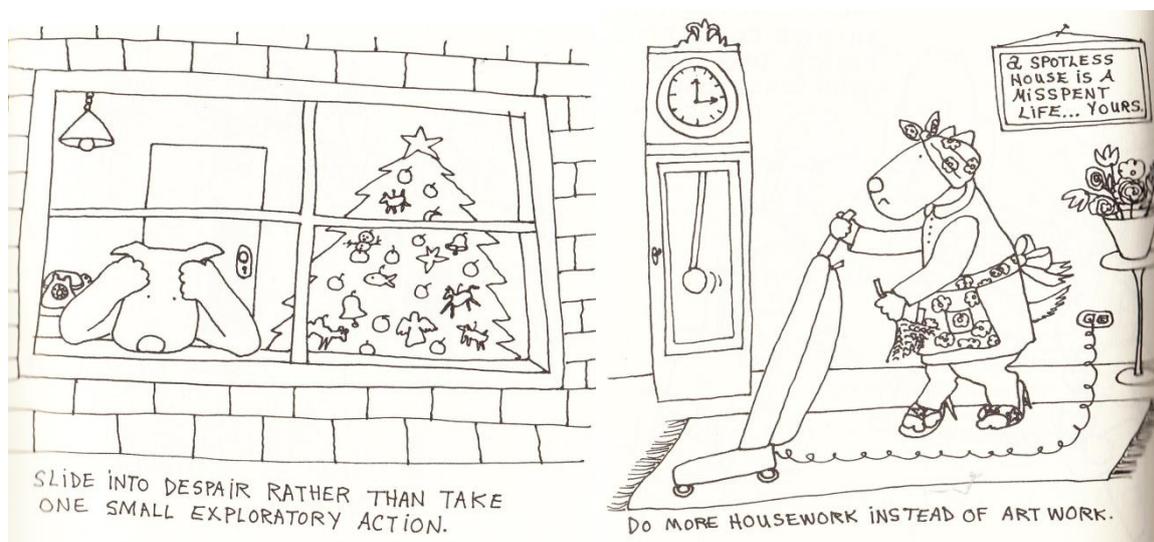
I cannot describe in words the level of resistance I feel to keeping this journal, recording my experiences, or facilitating myself to have experiences around meditation and healing...I am noting the facial expressions and tension in my face as I write this nearly against my will. (Bates, Personal Journal Extract,4.11.10)

Twice a week I would use the 20 minutes of quiet time while receiving acupuncture to test out these mindfulness practices by trying to concentrate on my breath, ‘in’, ‘out’. I would quickly become consumed with incessant thoughts and personal condemnations for not being able to concentrate and be present to my breath – a ‘simple’ task.

I would clean my house and tackle jobs that had been put off for years; engage in time-consuming cooking for every meal (which is extremely unusual for me); feel too tired to do anything except lie on the couch and watch TV; feel too depressed; be in too much pain; feel like I had other things to do, anything else to do...rather than face meditating or writing.



HOW TO AVOID CREATING ART (OR IN THIS CASE WRITE OR MEDITATE)



Sarah Bates, 'Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry'. 2011.



Julia Cameron 'How to Avoid Creating Art', (2005)

Resistance comes in the form of fears, anxiety, procrastination and avoidance...It is stunning how creative we can become to avoid anything that we imagine to be potentially uncomfortable, unpleasant or painful to us even though we consciously know the rewards of not avoiding these things. (Borkin, 2000:186)

MINDFULNESS SEEPING INTO CONSCIOUSNESS

In spite of the huge levels of resistance, parts of the learning I was trying to engage with, started impacting on my conscious thoughts. During 'simple' moments like cooking or holding my husband's hand, I would catch myself savouring the moment and thinking and feeling that 'this could be the best moment of my life' (one of Thich Nhat Hanh's sayings).

I do find that mindfulness is slowly infiltrating my life and my consciousness... about 2 weeks I 'awoke' to find I'd been totally entranced by these beautiful little starlings prancing about on the young branches of my fruit trees out our back. Even though I had become conscious, I found I was still able to decide to go back and meditate happily and completely on them, although I found my mind checking to see if I was doing it and noting it for reflection in the journal later... Being completely present in the moment is so rare and yet so light and peaceful.

(Bates, Personal Journal, 18.1.11)

As time went on, the resistance stayed and seemed to grow in force; I felt 'unable' to practice simple mindfulness techniques, such as paying attention to my breath, or silently scanning and focusing attention on different parts of my body; and I started to really feel the pressure of having to produce a thesis.

Amazingly, the acupuncture, true to Pat's promise, lifted the sciatica in mid December. Suddenly I had my life back. The disc problem was still there but I could move again without pain.

I started back working on a very part-time basis in January 2011 with 6 hours adult tutoring work in the local VEC (Vocational Educational Committee) and 4 hours lecturing work with the local Institute of Technology, both involved working with adults returning to education – an area of work I am very interested and passionate about. As time passed the back continued to improve, and in March I started working 4-8 hours per week as an adult guidance counsellor and tutor with people in recovery from addiction. I am able to be creative within this position and move at the pace of the clients.

In January, I was able to acknowledge I needed help to 'make' myself engage in mindfulness practices as I seemed unable to motivate myself to do them, and so I signed up to do an 8 week course on 'Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction' starting in February for 2.5 hours, one night a week.

THE 8 WEEK MINDFULNESS COURSE

The experience of the Mindfulness Course, which started on 2nd February 2011, was very unexpected and full of twists and turns. On the first night we were introduced to the concept of 'Mindfulness'. I left feeling it would be relatively easy to comply with the course requirement of doing mindfulness practices daily. 'No matter how well science describes mindfulness, it cannot capture the experience of it'. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:3)

Very soon, the landscape of my thinking and feeling changed. By week 3 I knew I was in trouble – I was feeling very depressed; I had an embodied moment (which only lasted about a minute) of pure terror which I knew well from night and day terrors I had experienced on and off as a child, a teenager, and as a young adult.

Last night...the old (longed to be forgotten) deep knowing that one day I shall cease to exist, even if there is 'life' after this physical form dies...at some stage, 'I shall cease to be... I hadn't realised until last night that I was examining the same terrain as where my deepest, darkest, blackest fears live. (Bates, Personal Journal, 13.3.11)

I had managed to push down these feelings of terror for nearly 8 years, since the last time I recognise myself as having depression – when I was 23.

I had been engaging in mindfulness practices, not on a daily basis as requested by the Mindfulness Course, but usually every 2-3 days. To begin with, the practice took the form of a 30 minute Body Scan, where you mindfully (in the moment) pay attention to the different parts of your body. I experienced huge resistance to doing the exercises and I often had problems remaining concentrated on my body and not ‘running off’ with my thoughts when I did engage in the practice. In time, I realised that this practice - which at its worst felt like a time consuming, ineffective practice; and at its best seemed to relax me and rid me of headaches - was somehow creating a deeper connection between the conscious and unconscious parts of me, allowing fear and sadness to rise up and consume me in the hours and days that followed the practice. ‘Later on, after you’ve been able to afford that peace and harmony to your body, helping it to release the tension, then you can identify your feelings and emotions’. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:7)

Perhaps unconsciously I had always known paying attention inward, meant first dealing with the buried fears before connecting to the ‘good stuff’ - that sense of peace and connection I was reading about - hence all the resistance.

Resistance...is anything we do to prevent ourselves from remembering or experiencing unpleasant feelings/...it may be rooted in more complicated underlying fears, sometimes harder to identify. It may be that there’s something I don’t want to look at, perhaps a part of myself that I’m so uncomfortable with, I go into denial about it.
(Borkin, 2000:186/187)

After the ‘terror’ experience I recognised that it was time to see a counsellor about this ‘terror’, that up until now I had assumed was part of me, could be pushed down, and had no cure. In the same week, members of my college supervision group and my college supervisor expressed their concern for me and I was strongly encouraged by my supervisor to ensure I did attend a counsellor.

I started seeing a psychotherapist, Mary, in the first week of March, and also returned to visiting Mia. My fate (‘the Believer’) had returned – my body was healing and I was experiencing a deeper connection within myself, as painful as it may have been.

I continued to see Mary on a weekly basis for nearly 2 months before cutting it down to every 2 -3 weeks. I am still seeing her (June 2011) and I see Mia at present every 2 weeks. Between these 2 places – one where the focus is on a talking therapy where I can speak about my thoughts, feelings and behaviours, fears and desires; and the other where I receive help through hands-on healing for my body to release fear and increase its capacity for having energy – I found the space and support I needed to tackle the depression that descended after engaging in mindfulness practices. I also started to find some of the answers behind the fears that were rising, which had long ago been buried. I started to understand why I had disconnected from my spirit and a deeper sense of self – because it was there that I had buried my fears of young.

Daniel Benor, a medical doctor, psychotherapist, researcher and recent ‘healer’, reviewed 191 controlled studies on healing. He wrote a book entitled ‘Spiritual Healing: Scientific Validation of a Healing Revolution’ and several on-line articles, one of which the following was taken from –

Healing also alleviates the anxieties which arise in conjunction with emotional releases, when long-buried hurts come to conscious awareness with all the intensity of the initial reactions to the traumas...Psychotherapy, in my practice, helps people to integrate the emotional releases and long-buried traumas which the healing and psychotherapy have brought to the surface...Spiritual healing opens people to awareness of deeper meanings to illness, which are then often amenable to psychotherapy. Illness can be a communication from a person's unconscious mind to bring to his awareness various inner conflicts or old hurts which might be ready for release. (Benor, 2010)

These fears, I now believe, are related to pre-natal experiences (when my mother was put on bed rest for 5 fearful months as the doctors believed she might miscarry) and the death of my little brother when I was 2. The personal journey I have taken in relation to exploring these 2 times in my life and their effect has been transformative, but is too long to be told here, and not necessary to the overall realisations of this inquiry.

It is essential that we deal with the deeper meaning of our illnesses. We need to ask, what does this illness mean to me? What can I learn from this illness? Illness can be seen as simply a message from your body to you that says, Wait a minute; something is wrong. You are not listening to your whole self; you are ignoring something very important to you. What is it? (Brennan, 1987:7)

I feel without the back problems, which pushed me to take time out from full-time employment, I would not have created a space where I could be ‘selfish’ enough to be able to fall apart and look at, and face, hidden fears of old.

At first, I was amazed that Mia and Mary encouraged me to continue with the mindfulness practices – I had hoped they would say ‘if they are causing pain then stop’. Instead they both helped me to look inside to gauge if and when I was ready to engage with a practice on a given day, as opposed to routinely engaging in daily mindfulness practices. ‘...the counsellor and Mia...could both see that the resistance was only a sign that it was what I needed to do. I’m beginning to believe that too myself’. (Bates, Personal Journal, 5.3.11)

Trying to learn from whatever my feelings are of vulnerability or distress or, being unbalanced in some way, do you know, so finding a way to inquire into that, to lean into it and to, because that’s where I really think, where adult learning happens...It happens for me from stuff I don’t feel fine about and I needed help in being able to lean into it.
(Interview with David, 23.3.11:89)

Mia also encouraged me to limit the time I spent on the practices, to start small so that I could deal with what was being released bit by bit. In mid-March I started engaging in regular 10 minute silent mindfulness meditations at night, where I simply tried to focus on my breath.

I needed to be careful not to bring up more than I could handle at any one time and to clear the ‘trauma’ as I went along – which I will do with Mia every 2 weeks and with the counsellor every week...for as long as it is needed.
(Bates, Personal Journal, 5.3.11)

During the 8 week Mindfulness Course I was introduced to several mindfulness practices – ‘Mindful Breathing’, the ‘Body Scan’, ‘Sitting Meditation’ and ‘Mindful Movement’. These practices are explained, along with an account of the experience of engaging with them, in the appendix 3.

I missed the last night of the Mindfulness Course as I was part-taking in a 5 day ‘Learning for Well-being’ Deepening Seminar in a monastery in France. The Seminar further introduced me to techniques which allowed one to be more present in their life, and concreted the idea that well-being for self leads to well-being for our communities – an association that many writers make including Thich Nhat Hanh.

If we are not happy, if we are not peaceful, we cannot share peace and happiness with others...If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 1987:3)

Children who are nurtured and grow as above [well-being as optimal dynamic of body, emotions, mind, and spirit] are far more likely to nurture and take care of themselves, other people, and the environment, which will make all the difference in how we live as individuals and in our shared environments.

(O'Toole & Kropf, 2010:39)

FRENCH RETREAT

The 'Learning for Well-being' Youth Movement organised a European Deepening Seminar, and invited 30 participants from all over Europe, who were youth (18-30) themselves, or professionals working with youth, who were interested in developing a deeper personal and professional understanding of well-being and the movement.

During these 5 days I was amazed to meet so many young people on the same journey I was on, all of us at different points in our own stories, but all seeking a greater connection within ourselves and with the world around us. It was here that I met 2 of the interviewees – Luis, a fellow participant, and Linda, one of the two facilitators.

The retreat introduced me to different practices which complemented the mindfulness practices I had been engaging with. These new practices could be utilised to help communicate more effectively with others, particularly in client work. I was taught that through shifting awareness between the mental, emotional and physical aspects of self, I could choose to be present in different ways to different people or different experiences. The information given throughout the seminar and the 'shifting of awareness' practices were based on 'Human Dynamics' (D. Horne & S. Seagal, 1997) and 'the Science of Being' (M. Muller, 1978) – both researched, well established theories on how humans operate and 'be'. This new learning is what I hope to explore and become more practiced in as the next phase of this on-going personal and professional journey into understanding myself and people better and more deeply, and improving my own well-being.

During the retreat I made a number of key realisations, the first being that much of my learning for well-being was and is, in essence the unlearning of established, habitual ways of being – normally centred in the ‘mind’, the mental or cognitive, rather than connecting with mind, body and spirit. ‘Most people spend their entire life imprisoned within the confines of their thoughts. They never go beyond a narrow, mind-made, personalized sense of self that is conditioned by the past’. (Tolle, 2003:13)

I also realised that in the past I have concentrated solely outwardly, on the needs of others, to the detriment of my own needs, and that now I am focusing inward. I now desire to be engaged in activities (which can be work related and with others) that promote my own development and deepening sense of self.

Wellbeing is personal. It starts with the individual before they can bring it outward...I am totally attracted to inner stuff rather than anything external... I don't want to verbalise, it interrupts my experience. I want to be inside me...I realise for now I want silence and to experience this just for me. Before, I gave greatly to others and their 'well-being' but I got lost and damaged in the process because I didn't have a safe constant within me.
(Bates, Personal Journal, 25.3.11)

I can identify this inner focus as a ‘stage’ within the process to ‘well-being’ – well-being starts with the individual and then spreads out from the individual once they have found their secure and unchanging sense of self and well-being. This path of progression is illustrated through the drawings I did after a semi-guided meditation at the retreat, called ‘Mountain Valley’. The ‘light and warmth’ represent connection, balance, sacred knowledge and well-being.



'The Mountain'

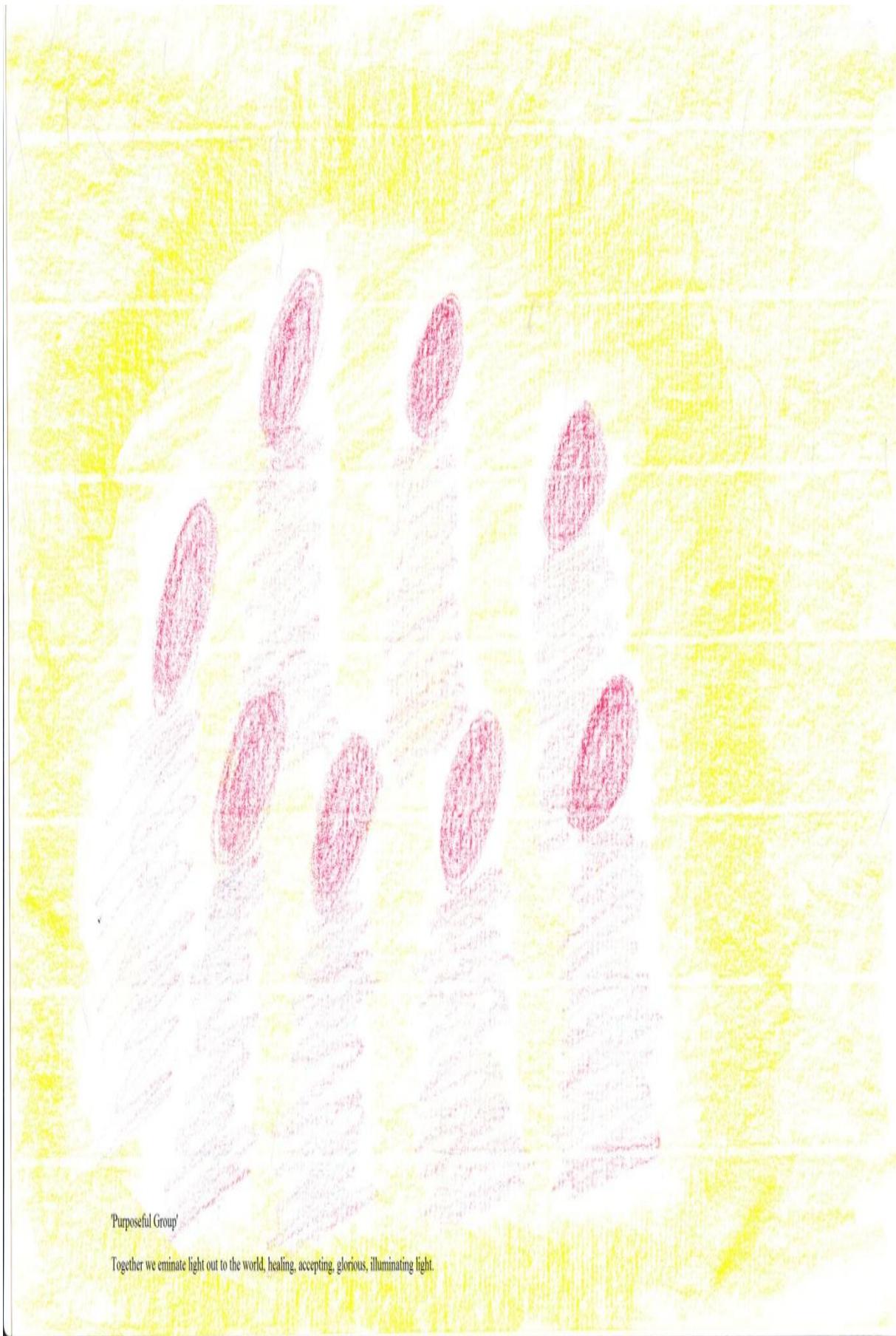
I receive the sun which is light and warmth, which I internalise on the walk back down from the mountain top to the valley where I will meet up with people like me



'Expression of self' at this moment

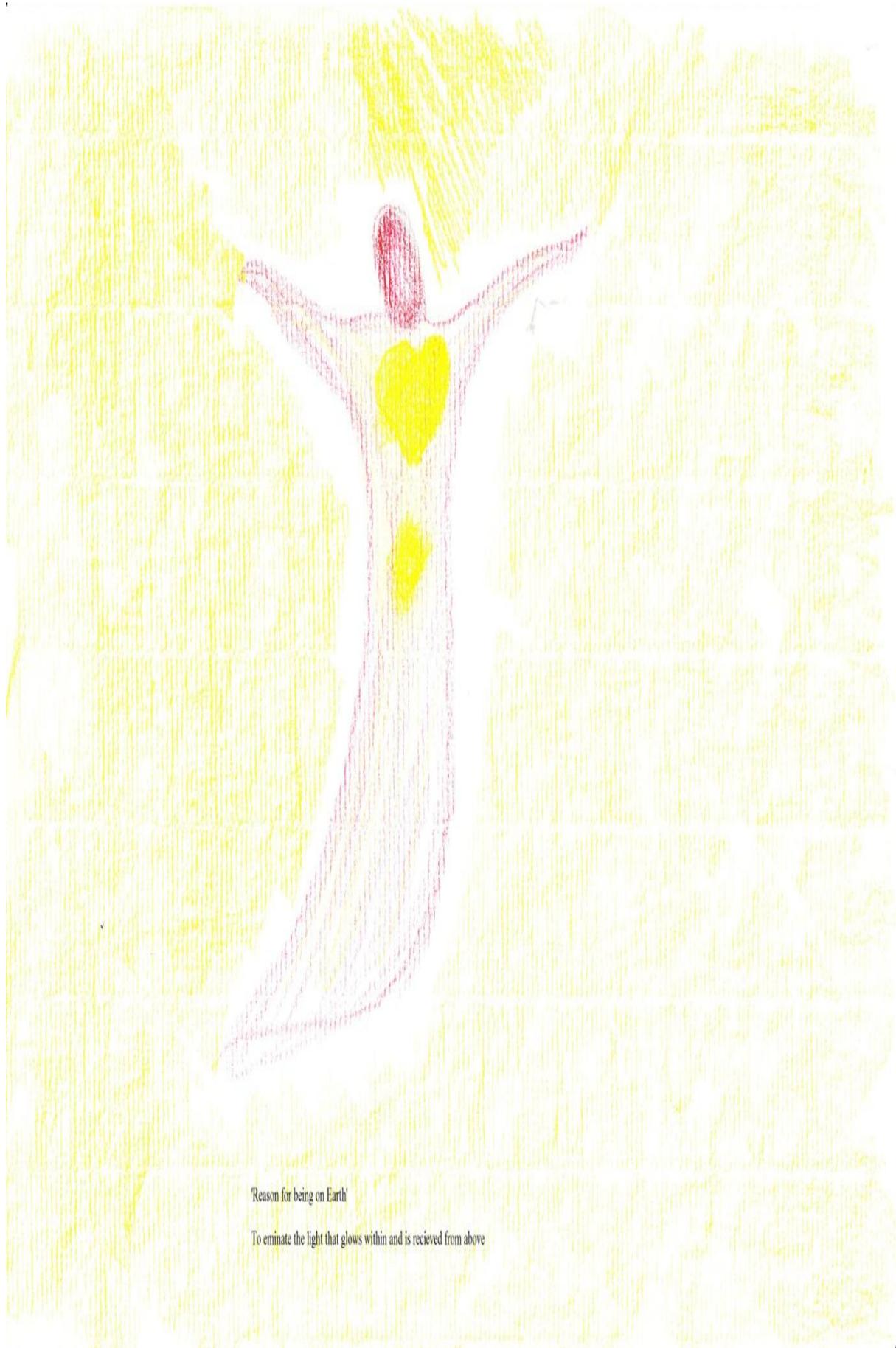
Taking the light and feeling of warmth back down the mountain with me. Holding them close and willing them to sink into me and become a constant part of me.

Forever requesting light and guidance from above.



'Purposeful Group'

Together we emanate light out to the world, healing, accepting, glorious, illuminating light.



LEARNING FROM ENGAGING IN MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

Mindfulness is a concept, but also a state of being – being present to the living moment and not being distracted by the past or the future.

Mindfulness is when I know, I have this experience of being fully alive, present to the moment and aware of myself in that moment... it's more an experience than, than a practice.
(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:38)

Mindful living is being present with all parts of yourself, with your mind, your emotions, your body and your spirit. In my experience of engaging in practices which promote this ability to remain present, and by consciously willing myself to be more mindful in my daily life, I have witnessed many changes within myself and the way I perceive myself and the world I live in. The following draws attention to a number of these changes.

Experiencing moments of unconscious mindfulness

Everyone experiences occasional spontaneous moments of mindfulness. By engaging in mindfulness practices one hopes to sustain the amount of time that they maintain a mindful awareness in their daily lives. (Smalley & Winston, 2010) My awareness of these moments increased, and I believe my ability to be mindful in normal daily activities is increasing.

I spontaneously experience certain events in the present, mindfully – at times when walking I get completely absorbed in looking at the branches of trees and watching how the light continuously changes them; When holding Kayla I am completely hers, lost in her softness, her beauty, her every little movement and gesture, her baby smell; when I really get into playing a song, which happens when I'm alone, with no audience, and the music is just for me.
(Bates, Personal Journal, 14.2.11)

My awareness of everything has increased - of why I am doing certain things and behaving certain ways, at any given time...and more importantly, that I have a choice.

It is not about controlling or changing the breath, feelings and thoughts, but simply being aware of them as they are in this moment.
(Bates, Personal Journal, 6.3.11)

Even being aware of not being present I think is a way of being present.
(Interview with David, 23.3.11:101)

I accept that I am judgemental, I cannot prevent the judgement. And it arrives, I recognise it as part of a pattern or the way I function, and then I try to put it aside and I continue with my work.
(Interview with Luis, 29.1.11:41)

Need for instant gratification

I acknowledged during this last year of great learning, self-reflection and self-discovery, that I have a need for instant gratification. I approached mindfulness as a desired thing to possess and I was extremely frustrated when I could not simply ‘learn it’ through sheer effort.

You don't have to grasp it [life] or you don't have to, as I would have, gone after it in ways, kind of urgently with various methods and so on, now I see, I suppose to some extent, my practice of spirituality, of awareness, has allowed me to see that actually a lot of life is to do with letting be, but I think it's being aware of letting be as well.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:24)

It was when I stopped viewing mindfulness as something to be learnt, but rather viewed it as a way of being that would be a lifetime's journey that I started to integrate mindfulness into my way of living and being.

Living for the future

In contrast to ‘instant gratification’, I paradoxically also live and work for, and towards, future moments, which when they arrive never feel as good I hoped they would be. I'm always dreaming of the next dream while living the present dream.

The present moment is the only moment that is real. Your most important task is to be here and now and enjoy the present moment/...only in this moment, in this place, can life be possible. We have already arrived.

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:8/14)

My ‘addiction’ to external stimulus

I also realised that I found being still and silent with myself very hard. I preferred talking about practices rather than being alone and engaging in practices; I preferred being in a group when practicing as opposed to being alone; I would get lost in the TV, the cooking, any activity that diverted my attention outward. I simply did not know how to just be with myself.

Realisation from counselling session today – I am very able to sit still when focused externally i.e. talking and listening to someone; I am extremely resistant to sitting still when focused inward.

(Bates, Personal Journal, 14.4.11)

I now seek out opportunities to be with myself, such as sitting and looking out the back porch doors eating my dinner, rather than sitting and eating in front of the TV.

I have also come to peace with allowing some things to be, without having to fully, cognitively, understand them.

I think there's a mystery about life too, so that you can't, I think you can't protect yourself from sometimes the illogicality, (yeah) or the paradox nature of life.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:40)

You need to let go to get what you want.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:60)

MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

I think a lot of people use different methods to remain present but wouldn't be using the term 'Mindfulness'.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:13)

There are many practices which promote mindfulness, some of which are described in the appendix 3. The following is a summary of some of the different practices that the interviewees engage in.

Nicola engages in simple, everyday events but experiences them mindfully, such as sitting in a park or at the beach, and being in nature. She also actively uses affirmations and sometimes engages in circle dancing and journaling.

There's certain steps to these dances [Circle dancing]. They're very simple and you, they're done in a group with other people and you just follow the, the steps. But some of them are based on like Bach flower remedies... And then there's some of them that are sort of Native American dances and some of them are just called nature dances.

(Interview with Nicola, 11.3.11:28)

Gerry engages in traditionally religious practices which he finds increases his awareness such as mindful prayer and going to mass. He also engages in 'body scans', walking and breathing in nature, and journaling.

And I would often go for a walk... I would go down to park, I would go down beside the river and I would become aware of my own breathing beside the river. And I would be aware of my feet as they go on the leaves on the little path down to the river. And I'm aware of light in the sky, aware of the sun coming up a bit.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:16)

David practices Tai Chi, yoga and Judo, regular journaling, and has attended workshops with a Zen Monk. He also creates space for 20 minutes of mindfulness meditation most nights.

The most beautiful thing I've learned in my life, is to stop. That is absolutely the first thing. I've also learned other ways through writing, of working with what I experience when I stop, but the most important thing is to have a period of time every day, when I stop, everything.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:58)

Luis engages in mindfulness activities, for example, being present to all sensations while washing the dishes. He has also engaged in Buddhist meditation with chanting, drawing, mindful breathing and writing/journaling.

I remember washing dishes and trying to, you know, try to feel every sensation of that while I was washing dishes. And that was what helped me in that moment where I was really broken, to, yeah, to live each moment. Each moment, one step at a time.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:51)

Linda has engaged with an assortment of creative mindful practices such as gardening, collecting rocks, drawing, creating with fabric, shifting awareness, Tai Chi, Pilates, Hellerwork, Rolfing, Feldenkrais, Raja Yoga and Hatha Yoga.

I practiced pulling weeds [gardening]...different kinds of weeds had different kinds of needs I wanted to release from myself. And I would have to relax into them (yeah) in a particular way and, and then they would, you know, release and they would be easy to pull out. If I didn't do that, if I just tried to move them as quickly as possible and not attend to them, they would break off and they would stay in there and they would re-sprout.

(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:79)

My own present mindfulness practices include journaling, eating while sitting on my comfortable red chair looking out at nature, and engaging in 10 minute silent mindful breathing sessions.

The relevance of mindfulness and mindfulness practices to professional practice is outlined within the 'Relevance of Inquiry' chapter.

JOURNALING

Personal journaling, ‘generally a narrative description of...inner process’, of a person’s thoughts, feelings and experiences, is a tool I have often used as a student to record personal progression. (Hubbs & Brand, 2005:67) I have also used journals as a record of ‘work’ conducted and completed for the Life Coaching Diploma and for the Higher Diploma in Adult Guidance and Counselling. It is a tool I have tested on myself and have encouraged my own clients and students to use.

While examining the practice of journaling, and talking to the interviewees about their experience of journaling, I realised I have journaled all my adult life in the form of song writing. Extracts from my personal journaling and song-writing have been used to illustrate different learning points and experiences throughout the thesis, allowing the reader an insight into my life, experiences and perceptions.

This ‘Journaling’ chapter will serve to define journaling; illustrate how journaling can be an effective research method; acknowledge resistance; identify how journaling can be used for self-care and for promoting one’s well-being; and how journaling can be a form of mindfulness practice. Throughout the chapter, I will continue to use personal journal extracts and quotes from the narrative interviews to further illustrate points.

JOURNALING – A RESEARCH METHOD

Since September 2010, I utilised a reflective journal to record my experiences of the research process and although it’s initial purpose was as a research method, the journal became a constant companion that was brought everywhere with me. The journal was a place in which I paid witness to my experiences - when I was in pain, exploring, confused; and it was a place to celebrate when I felt enlightened. ‘Writing gives voice to our feelings and – like it or not - it makes us pay attention to what’s going on inside us’. (Borkin, 2000:8) The journal took the form of occasional entries recorded on Dictaphone (when my resistance levels were particularly high and I felt unable to take pen to paper), and in 2 hardback notebooks, both of which were gifts and hold personal meaning for me.

As a research method, it was a wonderful reminder of what took place and when, and it served as a highlighter of key learning. It was also a tool which could be used to facilitate the reader to glimpse directly into different moments and events from the last 9 months. The subjectivity and honesty in the journal extracts allow the reader to make up their own mind as to whether the author's interpretation of her own reality and of the data collected matches their own perceptions and beliefs. 'Often our accounts of ourselves are unflattering and imperfect, but human and believable'. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000:748) While working within qualitative approaches based on the belief that 'a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating', it is fundamental to the value placed on the data produced that readers be able to see and accompany the researcher during their research journey, and be allowed insight into the inner motivations and experiences of the researcher during this time. (Mason, 2002:7)

Transformative learning involves the commitment of intentional action, a personal risk, a genuine concern for results to be better and the ability to draw on many techniques and opportunities to allow for personal growth. (Bruen, 2010:5)

Reflective journals are used by many researchers, particularly those who are researching elements within their own lives and their communities, such as auto(self)-ethno(the socio-cultural connection)-graphy (the application of the research process) and ethnography. (Reed-Danahay, 1997) However, a sense of value, and the motivation to keep a journal, may not be easily stimulated within researchers.

The novice narrative inquirer might find the making of journal entries a time-consuming distraction with a feeling that they are not adding up to much...What may appear to be insignificant nothingness at the time they were composed as field texts may take on a pattern as they are interwoven with other field texts in the construction of field texts. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:104)

RESISTANCE – FRIEND OR FOE

Within the previous chapter on 'Mindfulness' I described huge levels of resistance to engaging in mindfulness practices and to the act of journaling itself. 'In writing to heal in our lives, we resist change by not even beginning to write'. (Borkin, 2000:194) Through exploration and discovery I realised the resistance was a sign of how potentially healing the process could be.

The resistance was based on fear of change and what might come up for me if I fully engaged in my chosen research topic and research methods. ‘Despite our best intentions, we periodically sacrifice the life-changing benefits of writing to the tyranny of our resistance’. (Borkin, 2000:185)

I have wanted to start a personal reflection for months...The resistance I feel is huge. I'm starting to write now on the back of a small residue of motivation left by a conversation I had...Her advice 'write how you don't want to write and start from there'.
(Personal Journal Entry, 26.10.10)

Interestingly, resistance and lack of willingness to create time to journal, was experienced by the interviewees but in different ways. For example, when things were particularly hard, the resistance to journal was at its loudest for Gerry -

Sometimes it was painful because you'd be writing about painful stuff and funny, I've often found, if I was very down, I would do very little journaling. But as I would come out of the down times, I would be journaling again. And sometimes once I started journaling again, it would nearly be a sign that I was coming out of the down times.
(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:57)

Whereas for David, he journaled more during times of hardship.

It's varied at different times...there were times of crisis when I would keep a lot more than other times.
(Interview with David, 23.3.11:35)

JOURNALING AS A FORM OF SELF CARE

Journaling presents the opportunity for a therapeutic experience and the development of a potential lifelong tool. The following acknowledges the benefits of journaling experienced by the author and the 5 interviewees. It shows journaling as a self-care practice and also illustrates how journaling can be used to promote one's well-being and connection with all parts of themselves.

A release

Journaling is a private, safe place for a person to release all that they are holding within them, which can be in the form of feelings or thoughts. New realisations can come into consciousness during the physical act and whole-being (mind, emotions, body, spirit) process of journaling.

‘I see its value in integration of mind, body, heart and soul, in/ the prevention and diminishing of physical disease, and in the reduction and resolution of emotional trauma’. (Borkin, 2000:14/15) A physical body release can be experienced, where one’s physical state changes through the process of releasing in written and expressive form.

I write whenever I feel very overwhelmed with emotion that I need to put it on paper somehow...I really need to physically put something out...it helps also having the feeling that it’s no longer inside me somehow. (Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:173)

A record

Journaling, similar to a tradition diary, can act as a record of one’s struggles and successes.

Through my writing, reflected on my anxieties and my problems and difficulties. But I, I would have particularly enjoyed recording things achievements and things I really enjoyed and people I would particularly enjoy and so on. (Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:67)

A personal journal can also help a person measure change, progression, and alert them to digression.

Untangle the mess

Journaling helps a person examine an experience, feeling, thought, and try to figure out its meaning. ‘The reflective journal holds potential for serving as a mirror to reflect...heart and mind...allowing access to...internal “making of meaning”’. (Hubbs & Brand, 2005:61) Journaling facilitates a person to look at something from a number of different angles, and the process of journaling itself tends to organise and ground a person.

If I didn’t sit down and write it, I wouldn’t necessarily think about it and figure it out. (Interview with Nicola, 11.3.11:61)

...for reflection, for coming to terms with all kinds of things, both good and bad. I suppose working out stuff. (Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:81)

I use journaling in a large hard-back notebook, to try and create time and space to stand, to connect with what I'm doing...standing right in the middle of it, but also thinking about it at the same time, trying to process the way I'm feeling, my own process in relation to whatever it is I'm doing. It's a space for thinking. It's a space for feeling...to find out 'well who am I in this?' (Interview with David, 23.3.11:12)

Creativity

Journaling does not have to take the typical form of written diary-like entries but can materialise in many forms including lists, repetitions of one narrative, poems, songs, drawings, paintings, photos...whatever medium suits a person in that moment of expression. Journaling itself also promotes creativity, 'It opens up our creative blocks and allows our imagination and inventiveness to flourish'. (Borkin, 2000:19)

It is true I think that when you put things in writing, new ideas will come up. (Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:83)

The process of writing or drawing or just even making colours (yeah) has been a journaling process for me. (Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:49)

Gives voice

Journaling pays witness to, and gives a voice to, the often forgotten, overlooked, quieter or silent parts of ourselves.

The writing helps me to connect with my experience, especially the nuanced, layered kind of side of it...particularly the parts of myself or my selves that are marginalised or that are quietened or don't have a voice. (Interview with David, 23.3.11:16)

Journaling can also give voice to your 'self', in the sense that it can facilitate a person to speak with him/herself in a language of pure understanding. 'The reflective journal provides a vehicle for inner dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings, and actions'. (Hubbs & Brand, 2005:62)

There's people with whom you have a language that it's more similar to, than others...for me the person who has the language that is most similar to me is me. And so I think part of the journaling has been to be able to talk to myself...it's really me communicating to myself'. (Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:54)

Deeper connection with self

Journaling promotes a deeper connection with self and all aspects of self, and continues to deepen this connection with practice.

...a deepening awareness, rather than new awareness...I think in some ways, as I go on in life and as I give myself the opportunity to be aware, the difference between my day to day awareness and my writing may not be that much, although writing is kind of a different way of expressing or a more concrete way in some sense.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:83)

An audience

The importance of, and sense of, an audience differed among the author and the 5 interviewees. When reviewing the transcripts and thinking about the influence of audience on my own journaling – the thesis supervisor, examiners, future readers – I found myself in a debate as to whether journaling is a private or public act. ‘...in narrative inquiry, audience is always a presence’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:102)

I would like to...do things that are good for me...for me, for the joy and wisdom and peace that can be found. But even now, my mind is editing these words, wondering what will be useable for the final product.

(Personal Journal Extract, 26.10.10)

For some, journaling is purely private and never used for ‘public’ means. For example, Linda deletes without saving journaled pieces as it is literally the process of writing that holds any importance for her.

I've never journalled in a way of going back and looking at my journals.../I would throw it away or delete it.

(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:49/51)

Yet for many who journal, we forever feel the presence of future, potential audiences when writing, particularly if the journal is being used by researchers, learners, or song writers, where the audience is a part of the process. Journaling can also be used to allow someone close to you a glimpse of what you experienced at a given time.

I may actually show, most of the times if it's a gift or something that potentially can make someone happy. Or I've also chose to show when I was very fragile or in some sort of a turmoil at a certain point where I wrote and I want the other person to understand the state I was when I wrote that and just by reading it, or me reading it to that person, that gives an idea of my internal state, even though it was no longer.

(Interview with Luis, 29.1.11:195)

Journaling, although it can be challenging, can also go on unchallenged which may be a limitation of this solo act and a potential reason for including an 'audience' in the process. The presence of a future audience may encourage the writer to reflect, re-evaluate and critic their perceptions at a deeper, more honest level. '...the writer of the personal journal may well process and re-process the same concepts, repeatedly with little challenge to his or her accepted beliefs or ideas'. (Hubbs & Brand, 2005:67)

David has gathered journaled pieces together and placed them into the public sphere, believing there is huge learning to be had from what comes back.

Sharing that writing with others, a really important part of finding out different parts of yourself, or having things mirrored back to you that you weren't aware of.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:46)

Journaling and 'work'

The process of journaling is likely to impact all aspects of life, and may feed directly into people's work lives. How journaling can be used within work situations is explored more in the chapter on 'Relevance of Inquiry'.

I would feel 'that's good now, I'll bring that in to my class tomorrow' or 'I'll use that in my class tomorrow'.

(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:75)

Journaling – not for everyone

Journaling is one method of connecting with self and creating time to slow down and acknowledge all that takes place within our lives, but no one method will work for all people and it is an individual's responsibility, if they are committed to self-care and their own well-being, to experiment with different methods and find the method or methods that suit their interests, form of expression and lifestyle.

Writing doesn't suit everybody and reflecting in that way doesn't suit everybody.
(Interview with David, 23.3.11:20)

JOURNALING AS A MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Writing in a journal can have similar effects to meditation, in that it allows us to bring our full attention & awareness to the Present...Daily journaling allows us to reflect on the unique beauty of the Present Moment, and allows us to experience life more fully.
(Folmar, 2011)

The cognitive, mental part of ourselves, our mind, has developed over the years 'habits of mind' (Mezirow, 2000) which heavily influence the way we think, feel, act and react, effecting our perceptions of life and our reality. (Knowles, 1983) A way to overcome this 'auto-pilot' approach to life is to become more mindful and remain present in our lives. The act of journaling can ground a person in the present, the 'now', and help them to acknowledge and review the way they interpret the world. 'Reflective journals can be significant adjuncts in the transformative learning process...can provide ways to illuminate automatic thinking and habits of mind'. (Hubb & Brand, 2005:63)

Am I punishing myself? Are my previous habits and 'ways of going on' so strong that I won't allow myself to develop and experience more effective ways of being? Is my mind putting up blocks in order to protect itself and its present seniority? Is my mind afraid of being found out as the fallible, soul destroying mechanism that perhaps it is?
(Personal Journal Entry, 4.11.10)

Journaling, although a physical act, can be used to slow oneself down, to ‘stop’ and be still with experience.

It probably just helps me stay where I am, be in the now.

(Interview with Nicola, 11.3.11:53)

I have a practice of, of writing, as a form of, I suppose, stopping, stopping what I'm doing, to reflect on it.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:12)

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A narrative approach was applied throughout this inquiry and the way in which it has been presented. The motivation for looking into the meaning of well-being and connection, and experimenting with Mindfulness and Journaling, came out of my own personal journey and narrative. The approaches used to inform this re-search were methods valuing personal narratives and the unique subjectivity of each human being. The narrative methods took the form of narrative interviews and a personal journal which captured the research journey and all that entailed.

...narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a “re-search,” a searching again. Narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:124)

This ‘Narrative’ chapter will serve to define ‘narrative’; examine the use of narrative research approaches; reflect on the writing of the thesis – the narrative of the research journey; and look specifically at the experience of using narrative interviews from both the interviewer and interviewees’ perspectives.

A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO RESEARCH

The word narrative comes from the Indo-European root ‘gna’, meaning ‘both ‘to know’ and ‘to tell’’. (Elliott, 2005:10) A narrative approach was taken to this inquiry in order to illicit knowledge that was produced as the product of the research journey for the author, and also knowledge ascertained from the life journeys and narratives of others, captured in the books and articles quoted throughout the thesis and through the narrative interviews. ‘The social sciences are founded on the study of experience. Experience is therefore the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:xxiii) Not only were peoples’ life experiences and stories being captured (including the authors) but also the meaning they attached to these experiences and stories.

...the content of a narrative can be thought of as having two functions: one is to describe past events, i.e. to produce a chronological account for the listener or reader, and the second is the evaluative function, making clear the meaning of those events and experiences in the lives of the participants.

(Elliott, 2005:38)

A search for the question

One of the amazing, exciting and scary parts of partaking in a narrative inquiry is that you don't know where the story is going to take you until you get there.

*Writers and readers of narrative inquiry research texts need to muster a certain tolerance for the unease that may accompany ambiguity and the abandonment of what Dewey called *The Quest for Certainty* (1992). (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:154)*

So many times I thought I knew what my research question was and then the story would take another twist and turn.

*I'm so confused as to what it is I'm doing anymore, in relation to the thesis as a whole; and also what to do right now, in this moment.
The process, in a sense, is also a search for the question, let alone the answer.
The whole experience is ever changing and transient.*
(Personal Journal Entry, 12.2.11)

What started off as a quest for methods which would promote a professional carer's well-being turned into a person story of pain, depression, confusion, fear, search for self, and the discovery of new learning and new understanding.

Research also has its moments of falling apart, moments when the work falls out of the hands of the researcher, when the work seems to resist the conscious intentions of the researcher and begins to twist and turn in another way. Such moments are crucial to an approach to re-search that would keep soul in mind because they signal a shift from the researcher's ego-intentions for the work to the intentions that the work has for itself.
(Romanyshyan, 2007:47/48)

The ever changing path of this research narrative meant that the writing up of the thesis text was left until 'the last minute' as any effort to write the story before it was ended was futile – which the author learnt when chapters written in December 2010 no longer reflected the direction of the research by the end of January 2011.

As inquirers, we tend to define our phenomenon as if life stood still and did not get in our way. But life does not stand still; it is always getting in the way, always making what may appear static and not changing into a shifting, moving, interacting complexity.
(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:125)

Use of journals and transcripts

To summarise points made already in the 'Journaling' chapter, a personal reflective journal was used as a place for personal exploration and reflection on the experiences of the researcher while on the research journey. The journal was used as a research method, acting as a record of experience, and also promoting the depth and validity of information being produced by facilitating a reflective practice for the researcher. It served to appease the author's fear of her own subjectivity by allowing the reader access to the author's personal journey and narrative and openly owning all subjectivity. 'Van Maanen therefore advocates the explicit use of narrative to communicate the whole process of research to an audience'. (Elliott, 2005:165)

The journal was a vehicle of learning, not just through the process of recording/writing but also listening/reading back on entries later on in the research process. This review process of experience was extremely enlightening, marking clear learning points, and allowing meaning to be reflected upon and made of experiences that were confusing at the time. The interview transcripts also facilitated further learning in this way. 'I feel I'm really connecting to, and seeing my own story, in his [Gerry's] transcript, in a way that I didn't feel in the actual interview'. (Personal Journal entry, 15.5.11) Upon reading back over the conversations had with the interviewees, new learning and connections were made which had not taken place during the actual conversations/interviews themselves.

...field texts...allow inquirers to move between intimacy with field participants and a reflective stance; field texts need to be routinely and rigorously kept...field texts allow for growth and change rather fixing relations between fact and idea...field notes and other field texts need to be complemented by still other field texts, such as journal entries on research responses. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:95)

NARRATIVE STYLE OF WRITING

The thesis text is written in narrative form, telling the story of the research journey and acknowledging the many stories that were touched upon within the research narrative. 'As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their/ stories'. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:63/64)

The narrative style of writing pays homage to the importance of narrative in human life and further illustrates the power of narrative.

In each case there is a teller, a tale, something told about and a recipient of the tale. And it is this crucially intersubjective model of discourse which...marks narrative as a quintessentially communicative act. (Kearney, 2002:5)

The writing of the research narrative was a very powerful experience for the author, potentially far more powerful than a more traditional structure would have allowed. There was huge opportunity for learning and growth within the challenge of telling multiple stories within one overall narrative. These stories consisted of the research journey, the author's personal experiences, and the stories of the interviewees.

[The narrative inquirer/researcher is]...trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:147)

NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

5 'narrative interviews', as defined in the 'Introduction', were undertaken as part of the primary research conducted in order to gather "authentic insights' into people's experiences'. (Silverman, 2005:11) The interviews took the form of recorded conversations based on a topic guide (appendix 4), which the interviewees had received prior to the interviews taking place, along with an information sheet and a copy of the consent form (appendix 5). The interviewer's questions were mainly open-ended, or in the form of prompts, encouraging the interviewees to expand on points they had introduced. The interviewer had a paper guide present during the interviews to ensure all research areas were covered (appendix 6). The interviews were followed up with an emailed optional questionnaire on the potential impact of the interview, post-interview.

There was really a lot of 'allowness' for the conversation to kind of explore it's new branches (yeah) but still keep a track, so I, I don't feel that there is anything missing. (Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:146)

Things of relevance or importance to me may not have been highlighted so much or even realised if it was not the type of interview which told its own story and followed a course which neither of us expected and both of us benefitted from.

(Nicola, Follow-Up Questionnaire:17.5.11)

Consent was a multi-dimensional, sensitive issue as narrative interviews can lead to unpredictable places and can result in the telling of very personal information. Therefore the researcher was very aware that consent prior to the interview needed to be revisited once the interview had taken place, again when the interviewee's had received a copy of their interview transcript, and a last time before the thesis was submitted. The issue of whether interviewees wanted to be identified within the thesis text was, for some, a decision that required time and contemplation. All decided to be named and all checked and approved how they were introduced in the introduction chapter.

Positive experiences from the interviews

It was the aim of the researcher that the research would not harm anyone but instead be of benefit to all stakeholders including the reader and the interviewees. This sentiment appears in Irish and International writings and guidelines on conducting research. 'Ensure that those who intervene in other's lives do so with the most benefit and the least harm'. (Oakley, 2000:1) The Irish Association of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) 'Code of Ethics, states:

At all times, Guidance Counsellors protect the dignity and wellbeing of research participants...take all reasonable steps to ensure that any collaborators in the research treat participants in an ethical manner.

(IGC, 2011)

Of the 5 interviewees, 4 experienced the interviews as extremely positive, information and for some, transformative.

It's about going a long way, climbing a mountain and suddenly you turn back and you look at the path that you have gone through and this conversation was a bit that for me.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:138)

Interestingly, several of the interviewees felt they had gotten far more from the interview than I, the interviewer, could have gotten. The reality was I had an abundance of rich information from which to select from.

I think it was very interesting and I think, I think the, it was very useful for me, I can't imagine it being useful for you. (Interview with David, 23.3.11:156)

I may have initially been doing a favour for you in participating in your research but it seems to me, from that sentence you said as you made that link, that I benefitted far more than you from the whole process. (Nicola, Follow-Up Questionnaire:17.5.11)

It was very important to me, as someone trying to learn the 'trade' of narrative interviewing, that the experience would be beneficial for all. When interviewees had personal realisations, and when the joint, communicative, meaning-making process which was the interviews, produced new connections and learning, there was energy and a 'high' about the conversation.

I felt energized when leaving [after interviewing David].
(Personal Journal Entry, 22.3.11)

I think the most satisfying parts of the interview for me were when you were also involved, do you know. And that would prompt me to think in different ways and where the more strictly social science interview would keep you out of it, do you know. So I think it's important for you to be in it, (yeah, yeah) because that creates a synergy or creates different meaning-makings (yeah, yeah) you know.
(Interview with David, 23.3.11.159)

Part of the power of story/narrative is that it is generative -- making connections in the moment that lead to further connections/embellishments/additions ... eventually to new insights and actions. (Linda, Post Interview Email:19.4.11)

It helped me to see I have progressed perhaps in a way I had not envisioned.
(Nicola, Follow-Up Questionnaire:17.5.11)

Renewal of well-being practices

A key part of the inquiry was to identify and ‘test’ 2 practices, Mindfulness and Journaling, which would promote a person’s (in particular caring professionals) sense of well-being. The power of the narrative interview can be seen in the activity that was encouraged as a result of the energy created within the interviews.

When we were talking about that particular aspect of writing and the language...that was kind of bringing the awareness that, of that importance and that I should probably make the time in there to write in whatever language comes out.

(Interview with Luis, 29.3.11:137)

I will actually take this experience and the next piece that I’m going to do is, is today, is that I’m going to go into my studio and work with fabric and so, this will be part of what I use to create whatever I’m going to create with fabric today.

(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:204)

I spoke about a form of meditation I sometimes used in the morning which I felt I had varying levels of 'success' with...on some level I must have been reminded of its place or its value because I began to use it daily again after the interview.

(Nicola, Follow-Up Questionnaire:17.5.11)

In David’s case the reading of the transcript was an experience that helped and informed the way in which he is concluding his doctoral thesis on Auto-ethnographic writing as a method of inquiry into professional practice identity.

I really enjoyed re-reading the transcript and hearing the conversation from a distance.

(David, Follow-Up Questionnaire:12.5.11)

Echoes of each other’s stories

The stories belonging to the author and the 5 interviewees, although unique, had common themes and qualities, reaffirming the hope that the narratives told within this thesis will have relevance for many. It was evident that the author and the interviewees, 3 women and 3 men of various ages, nationalities and professions, were at different stages of the same journey.

...a heartfelt sense of understanding and unity of experience along with our very distinct and different inner and outer diversities.

(Personal Journal Entry, 29.3.11)

...it’s great to hear the end stories as well.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:176)

Critique and limitations of interviews

The narrative interviews did not cause harm to any of the interviewees but they were experienced differently by the interviewees. In Gerry's case, he experienced the interview as somewhat limited and tiring.

I suppose I'm tired now...because I know I have spoken at a deep level/...I'm also very aware that it's kind of very one-sided, has to be I suppose, it's the nature of the thing.
(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:120/121)

I was personally disappointed that the interview with my dad, Gerry, had not been more positive for him. Upon reflection, I acknowledged that I had been very nervous about interviewing him, and of not performing well, and that the father-daughter relationship inevitability affected both of us and our expectations of the interview and possible outcomes. It was also only my second official narrative interview.

I think it matters an awful lot that it's you who are conducting the interview, who I have a very close relationship with.
(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:120)

After the interview with Gerry, with support from my supervisor, I had to allow for the fact that I was learning and may not be able to create transformative spaces for all my interviewees...or future clients or students. 'Artists, to be successful and competent need to practise and develop their "craft". This is no different for qualitative researchers'. (Hollway & Todres, 2007:16)

Nicola observed discomfort within herself about having to label her experiences to fit into the language of the research. This is a very interesting dilemma and one that with further experience or experimentation might be solved – is there a way to allow people express their experience without having to pin it down?

I think it is very interesting research but I felt just a little bit uncomfortable about having to put explanations, measurements and labels on experiences like these. It is just that to me the nature of these types of experiences and ways of living are very creative, open and personalised and it feels like they do not go into boxes.
(Nicola, Follow-Up Questionnaire:17.5.11)

The told and untold stories

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts were then coded in relation to key themes and sub-themes. The key themes are reflected in the focus of the thesis – ‘Self Care’ & ‘Well-being’, ‘Mindfulness’ & ‘Mindfulness Practices’, ‘Journaling’ and the use of ‘Narrative’ research approaches.

All interviewees consented to the inclusion of their transcripts in the thesis after receiving them. At the time of writing, there was a constant process of deciding which ‘stories’, of the many stories told within the author’s reflective journal and from the interviews, would be used within the confines of the official thesis text.

The writing of this thesis is the writing of a journal for me – pulling together all the different parts of the story and deciding which narratives get told, which narratives are just for me, and noticing the narratives that aren’t considered.

(Personal Journal Entry, 22.4.11)

RELEVANCE OF INQUIRY

RELEVANCE OF ‘SPIRITUALITY’ IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

‘Spirituality’ & Therapeutic Work

As illustrated through the author’s narrative and those of the interviewees, an inner connection with all aspects of being – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, proved to be very important and necessary to the health and wellbeing of all 6 individuals.

It is therefore suggested that a sense of ‘spirituality’ is important to maintain when working with people in a caring and therapeutic profession. It is not necessary to have an outward religious faith in order to operate as a spiritual being with appreciation for the spiritual aspects of others.

Toward the end of his life, Carl Rogers (Thorene, 1992) wrote about a mystical, spiritual, fourth dimension in which the three core conditions of caring – congruence, acceptance, and empathy – culminate...From this perspective, the practice of spiritual care is about a spirituality not floating in abstract ideals, split from the body and our daily lives, but grounded in the concreteness of earthy places and in the reality of relationships in the everyday world. (VanKatwyk & Laurier, 2003:18)

Various psychologists including Carl Rogers and Karl Jung acknowledged the spiritual dimension of the person and also a spiritual connection that could be encouraged within therapeutic sessions.

Jung sought to prove that the spiritual dimension is the essence of human nature. He was an investigator of the inner world who developed...a theory of personality that included a dynamic conceptualization of the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions as striving for unity and wholeness with each person. (Sermabeikian, 1994:179)

‘Spirituality’ & Adult Education

A sense of wholeness, connectiveness and spirit are often associated with adult education. Adult learning environments are often at their best when facilitative, non-directive, and working on the assumption that adults possess the personal resources required to learn and develop given the right environment. Educational writers and theorists such as Freire and Krishnamurt assert that ‘education is not just a matter of training the mind, but also an inquiry into the whole significance of living’. (Putti, 2000:40)

Sarah Bates, ‘Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry’. 2011.

‘Spirituality’ & Adult Guidance and Counselling

In today’s society, it is accepted, and even expected, that adults will have several careers. ‘...the average adult will make five to seven major career changes in a lifetime’. (Hansen, 1997:10) The desire to change career direction is a possible reflection of self-development. Education, training and new career paths taken up by adults, are often an outward reflection of an ever changing, ever deepening, sense of self - which can include a deeper affiliation with the spiritual aspect of oneself. A person’s career development is ‘a continuous, lifelong process of developing and implementing a self-concept, testing that self-concept against reality, with satisfaction to self and benefit to society’. (Super,1951:88)

In Ireland, we are currently (2011) in the midst of a recession, where there is little employment options, and people are being encouraged to use this time to re-train, up-skill and return to education. ‘Obviously, the old models of fitting people into jobs will become useless if there are no jobs to fit into’. (Hansen, 1997:10) I view this ‘terrible’ economic infliction as an extremely freeing event which creates opportunity for people to reassess their career and work interests, and to follow a career path that will lead to fulfilment and an outer expression of inner values and desires. Now, when it is acceptable not to be working, is the perfect time to follow career dreams. ‘In times of economic downturn, it may be an opportune time to review your own goals, motivation, life roles, meaning and purpose, interpersonal relationships, and concern for community’. (Hansen, 2009:na)

In order for people to be aided in identifying career paths that will lead to meaningful roles for themselves within their community, it is important and necessary for adult guidance counsellors to address and welcome all the parts of a person into the adult guidance session and to align career decisions with a persons’ inner values, desires and sense of self.

They (career guidance professionals) can also help people see the connectedness of the various parts of their (our clients’) lives – that is, the relationship between women and men, family and work, the rational and the emotional, the intellectual, physical, and spiritual, the personal life and the career, the local, national, and global – and the integration of the parts into a whole. (Hansen, 1997:11)

Integrated Life Planning

Sunny Hansen's 'Integrated Life Planning' (1997) approach to career guidance does just this. Integrated Life Planning (ILP) is a 'comprehensive model that brings together many aspects of people's lives', and operates 'in harmony with many other works of postmodern thought that call for connectedness, pluralism,/ spirituality, subjectivity, wholeness, and community'. (Hansen, 1997:11/12) ILP does not view 'job' as separate from all the other aspects and roles in a person's life, and hence all of the person is addressed within the model, which is not solely for career advisors but also anyone working with adults in a therapeutic or educational role, and for the human resource (or similar) departments/personnel of organisations. (Hansen, 1997)

The ILP process has 6 perspectives, the 5th of which strongly acknowledges and integrates 'the need for reflection on one's own developmental priorities for mind, body and spirit'. (Hansen, 1997:17) Hansen views 'spirituality, meaning and purpose' as 'key aspects of life planning'. (Hansen, 1997:18) The 6th perspective then focuses on 'the importance of change itself, both personal and social' (Hansen, 1997:17) - leading to the assumption that when one has reached a balance and connection within themselves, between mind, body and spirit, it creates a natural desire to reflect this outward for the benefit of one's community, be it local and/or global. This progression is echoed in the 'Learning for Well-being' Movement literature and the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Hansen employs practices and tools which are based on the same principles as the 3 reflective methods employed in this thesis – mindfulness, journaling and narrative. The practices utilised within the ILP model include 'lifelines, journaling, finding balance, career as story, visualizations, the career rainbow, and the circle of life'. (Hansen, 2008:6)

RELEVANCE OF 'JOURNALING' IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

'The rationale for using reflective journaling in higher education is grounded in general learning theory, adult learning theory, experiential learning theory, and...student's personal growth and professional development'.

(Hubbs & Brand, 2005:61)

As illustrated throughout this thesis, and particularly in the chapter on Journaling, reflective journals are excellent tools for educators, adult guidance counsellors, learners and clients to use in order to connect experience with meaning and understanding. The researcher's personal reflective journal is evidence of the importance of journaling as a tool promoting self-development and self-discovery. 'I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning'. (Rogers, 1961:276)

It [personal journal] helped me to connect with learning, is, but to connect myself with learning rather than learning as an abstract thing.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:27)

However, as acknowledged in the chapter on Journaling, journals can be limited if the content is never challenged, so the use of a supervisor or reflection group where the journal can be brought, can add to the potential for growth and self-awareness from journaling.

RELEVANCE OF 'MINDFULNESS' IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Mindful awareness aids a professional to remain congruent and stay aware of their inner workings and the 'reality' of their external world. In particular mindfulness can aid an educator and adult guidance counsellor to remain aware of transference and counter-transference. 'Mindfulness is a tool we can use to examine conceptual framework, to lessen the influence of preconceptions, and to experience "what is" *by choice*'. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:10)

Mindfulness 'is a practice that can be done by anyone, regardless of age, background, or religion', making it an accessible and valuable tool for educators and learners, adult guidance counsellors and clients. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:xvi)

'When teachers are fully present, they teach better. When students are fully present, the quality of their learning is better'. (Viola in Schoeberlein, 2009:xi) There are many books and articles explaining how professionals can teach mindfulness to their students and clients. (Examples – Schoeberlein (2009), 'Mindful teaching & Teaching Mindfulness', and Moss, Waugh & Barnes (2008), 'A Tool for Life? Mindfulness as self-help or safe uncertainty')

The Mindfulness Stress Reduction Course which I engaged in highlighted for me how mindfulness can be used to decrease the amount of stress individuals experience and to create a constant inner strength and belief in self. This ‘state’ and coping mechanism could be extremely powerful in learning and adult guidance situations, especially in times of high unemployment.

Mindfulness-based stress interventions are well suited to reduce the anxiety of clients living with employment uncertainty...Mindfulness...can reduce psychological suffering by reducing the anticipation anxiety experienced by employed workers who face a high degree of employment uncertainty. (Jacobs & Blustein, 2008:175)

Mindfulness can be seen as a way to greater fulfilment in life for anyone willing to experiment with it. It does not belong to the world of problem solving, but rather life enhancement. ‘With mindfulness, we can preserve an inner joy, so that we can better handle the challenges in our own lives’. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:xi)

However, based on my own experience, Mindfulness should not be used with clients or learners until they are made aware of the possible ‘backlash’ of painful emotions, memories etc that can arise, and unless the therapist, adult guidance counsellor or teacher ensures the client/learner has sufficient support post-mindfulness practice.

It is also important to acknowledge that ‘Mindfulness’, particularly in relation to its impact on stress, has been put to the test and has come up short in some of the research carried out. One such example can be found in an article published in ‘The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry’ in 2007, which reported on research that stated mindfulness does not impact at all on anxiety and depression. (Toneatto & Nguyen, 2007) However there is many research studies which state the opposite. Susan Smalley and Diana Winston, whose book ‘Fully Present’ is quoted throughout this thesis, both work with M.A.R.C., the Mindful Awareness Research Centre in UCLA. Their book is filled with references to research which positively reflects the impact of mindfulness on individuals, including studies not conducted by M.A.R.C.

In a study of 291 high school students in the United Kingdom, a stress reduction program (including mindfulness) resulted in one-letter-grade-higher academic performance. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:219)

Sarah Bates, ‘Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry’. 2011.

RELEVANCE OF ‘NARRATIVE’ FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The impact of narrative as a research approach has been highlighted within the chapter on ‘Narrative’, and the following briefly highlights its relevance as an approach and tool for adult guidance counsellors and adult educators.

Employing narrative approaches to adult guidance are becoming more and more popular, and more creative ways of dealing with people’s stories and using them for self-reflection and development are being designed. For example, The Career Learning Network (UK, 2008) has a ‘Storyboard Handbook’ for adult guidance counsellors and adult educators, promoting ‘narrative for well-being’.

Storyboarding engages students in setting out stories to enable them to take care of their own well-being and the well-being of others...storyboarding enables students to take command of her and his own story. (Law, 2008:i)

Narrative interviewing is also a tool than can be used with any client group, or indeed any people, in any situation, including learning environments. Most people will give information and insights about themselves and their lives if they are given space and are listened to.

...interviewees are likely spontaneously to provide narratives in the context of interviews about their experiences, unless the structure of the interview itself or/ the questioning style of the interviewer suppresses such stories. (Elliott, 2005:28-29)

THE INTERNATIONAL ‘LEARNING FOR WELL-BEING’ MOVEMENT

The French deepening seminar that I participated in during this research journey, illustrated that the need to see oneself and others as whole beings – mind, body and spirit - particularly within educational settings, is part of an international call for change and inclusion. The specific movement I have aligned myself with is the ‘Learning for Well-being Movement’. (www.learningforwellbeing.org)

Learning for Well-being is the process of fully engaging and expressing who we are as individuals within the context of our common humanity. It inspires us to find ways for being our becoming – living in our present moment while developing, challenging and creating ourselves for the future. (O’Toole & Kropf, 2010:5)

Within the ‘Learning for Well-being’ (LWB) philosophy, narratives are recognised as ‘universal to human experience’. The aim of the movement is to ‘develop and share a new story of what we can create together’, in relation to supporting human development in all learning environments. (O’Toole & Kropf, 2010:6) The definition of well-being utilised within this thesis came from the LWB literature.

Learning for Well-being aims at realizing our unique and full potential through developing our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects in relation to self, others, and the environment. (O’Toole & Kropf, 2010:5)

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the personal and professional use of mindfulness and mindfulness practices, journaling and the power of story through narrative research approaches, within the confines of limited space and time. There are many stories which were lived and discovered throughout the research process which have not appeared within the scope of the thesis, but I believe I have adequately facilitated the reader to get an insight into this personal and professional transformative journey. ‘To write down the soul of the work...is to write from that place that acknowledges not only that the work is incomplete, but also that it will always be so’. (Romanyshyan, 2007:313) I trust the messages within this inquiry have value to most, if not all adults, particularly those working in caring and education professions.

The following outlines a number of key learnings and realisations; suggestions on how the research could have been enhanced; areas of further research; and a possible critique of this research inquiry.

PERSONAL REALISATIONS AND DISCOVERIES

There were several intense personal realisations made while undergoing this research process, the following highlight two prominent realisations.

Look within

In the introduction to this thesis I spoke about how in the past, paths I have followed have fallen away before me. Through this re-search I have learnt that what I sought (a sense of purpose, peace, connection with mind, body, emotions and spirit) could not be found outside of me, where I had always been looking for them, but rather could be found within me. ‘The Believer’ in me had always trusted that they were somewhere to be found, and through this re-search process I now have the tools to locate them, within myself.

I remember searching for you under every stone.

Now I'm beginning to wonder, will you ever come again.

(Extract from ‘Letter to God’, Song lyrics, Bates:2002)

- Full lyrics in Appendix 7

A lighter me

On a very personal note, I had not realised that I was living my life de-pressed, in the sense that I was carrying heavy burdens within me that I had always just accepted as part of me. Through this experience I have realised how much my life has been effected by pre-natal experiences, and that I can heal these body memories and release past fears to live a lighter and more connected (with my spirit) life.

SYNCHRONICITY

Synchronicity, or what some might refer to as chance, fate or co-incidence, has been ever present on this research journey.

Back pain

Back pain, what seemed like a barrier to all I had wanted for myself, instead proved to be the reason for the creation of space which allowed and motivated this inquiry. I now feel like a much healthier, 'well-er', connected person than when I was working full-time and not in pain. 'Ultimately pain can be a fascinating area of self-discovery and exploration'. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:94) I also feel that I can now return to full-time employment (if I wish), a far better equipped, connected person, who values her own well-being, and understands its value for others as well as herself.

Perhaps this back condition is a blessing. Amazing to think my body, through inflicting pain, had to stop me from charging through life. I hope to learn to live in the moment, to satisfy myself in the simple things, to create peace within myself.

(Personal Journal Entry, 26.10.10)

Synchronised messages

Synchronicity appeared in the receiving of the same message at the same time from different sources – a 'co-incidence' that happened many times during the last 9 months.

Also all 3, Mia, the Mindfulness Group and my counsellor are echoing the same messages at the same time, and as my counsellor says, this shows that I am on the right path and engaging with the right things for me at this moment.

(Personal Journal Entry, 5.3.11)

Learning for Well-being

It was while on the train, on my way home from a college session in January that I received a phone call inviting me (1 of 3 Irish people invited) to the Learning for Well-being Seminar, a retreat that focused on ways of viewing the world and well-being, and using practices that directly reflected and enhanced my research. It was also while attending this Seminar that I met 2 of the interviewees, whose experiences and narratives greatly added to this thesis and my personal research journey.

Interviewees and co-incidence

Synchronicity also seemed to be alive and well for the interviewees. The following quotes illustrate 2 of the many co-incidental sub-plots.

I'm very happy to be part of this and my own doctorate is about writing practices anyway... So actually this is kind of useful to me too.

(Interview with David, 23.3.11:10)

...before I take a couple of days just offline...I just need to have some time for re-centring myself. But I thought, I thought 'well, would there be any perfect, what perfect way to start that process than to talk to Sarah on this topic, self-care.

(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:17)

LEARNING RE CLIENT WORK

Increased empathy

Having experienced daily pain over a period of several months, I have a new understanding of how carrying a burden can decrease a person's capacity to cope with 'simple' tasks and problems, and with life itself. I now have more empathy with clients who are worn down by problems that seem manageable from the outside.

I now also possess a larger and more diverse tool bag than before and would have no hesitation promoting the use of mindfulness and journaling to clients, as long as sufficient supports were available. I have always been interested in people's stories, an interest which has increased since experiencing the power of intentionally creating space for people's stories to be told and heard.

Walk the walk

The best ways to learn and understand something is to live it and to teach it. By experimenting with mindfulness, journaling and narrative, I feel I have experienced the benefits and the hardships attached with each and could now pass on this learning to others, which will benefit future clients and students.

Adult educators who are able to facilitate the process (of bringing a spiritual perspective to the classroom)...are those who are engaged in their own inner journeys. There is a saying in Latin which goes thus: nemo dat quod non habet. No one can give that which one does not have. (Putti, 2000:44)

Self-care and personal well-being

The above leads onto the fact that adult guidance counsellors, caring professionals and educators need to look after themselves if they want to be able to provide transformative spaces for their clients and students on an on-going basis.

In the midst of our work in supporting our clients, our families, and our communities, we must create the time and space to preserve and build our own health...This not only ensures/ that we can continue to serve others, but also enables us to model healthy behaviours for the benefit of all those we care about. (Hansen, 2008:8/9)

I strongly believe that part of maintaining one's personal well-being and fulfilling one's potential professionally, is by engaging in challenging experiences and learning opportunities that increase our self-awareness and personal development, as this research journey has done for me. '...if I am interested in creating helping relationships I have a fascinating lifetime job ahead of me, stretching and developing my potentialities in the direction of growth'. (Rogers, 1961:56)

Developing awareness of my own feelings and how they worked certainly impacted on how I was able to listen to students as they talked about their feelings.
(Interview with Gerry, 12.3.11:102)

I don't think I could do the work that I do, well I know I couldn't, if I weren't doing...the practices that I'm doing.
(Interview with Linda, 18.4.11:133)

HOW THE RESEARCH COULD HAVE BEEN ENHANCED

In some ways, if I had attempted less, for example just focused on the power of narrative, mindfulness or journaling, I would have had more space and time to devote to one area of focus which may have enhanced the overall thesis text. ‘Limited time and resources may mean that the researcher can take only a sample of opinion rather than gathering from the whole population’. (Goodwin, 2006:41)

If time and word count had facilitated it, there were several ideas which I would of liked to have employed – to conduct more one-to-one interviews; to conduct a questionnaire with a larger, less specific sample group; to feed the findings back to an interested focus group, ‘we ask others to read our work and to respond in ways that help us see other meanings that might lead to further retelling’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:60); to engage in a mindfulness retreat; and to engage in a journaling retreat.

One interesting suggestion made by an interviewee was:

to have met the other 4 interviewees. Not possible I know, but it feels as if we have participated in something separately rather than collectively.

(David, Follow-Up Questionnaire:12.5.11)

CRITICISM OF RESERACH METHODOLOGY

Research approaches that emphasise subjective experience, especially in the case of self-narratives and auto-ethnography, are prone to being viewed as narcissistic and overly personal. ‘To dismiss the criticism that narrative inquiry is overly personal and interpersonal is to risk the dangers of narcissism and solipsism’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:181) However, I feel there is a balance between writing all about oneself, in a totally subjective manner, and including one’s own narrative to illustrate a meaningful story that can have relevance for all. I hope that this thesis, with several narratives interwoven, including the author’s and the 5 interviews’, has found that balance between pure storytelling and research. ‘Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines’. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:121)

FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

There are many areas of interest and areas for further research that can be identified within these research topics and narrative research approach. However, one area in particular stood out for me – language.

The limitations of language, the spoken work, were expressed repeatedly within the researcher's personal journal and the narrative interviews. It would be extremely useful to inquire into other methods of expression and whether there are ways of using language to create non-limiting spaces for conversation and meaning making.

Language isn't mine, I don't own it. It doesn't describe accurately my experience, it approximates. (Interview with David, 23.3.11:50)

I felt just a little bit uncomfortable about having to put explanations, measurements and labels on experiences like these. It is just that to me the nature of these types of experiences and ways of living are very creative, open and personalised and it feels like they do not go into boxes. (Nicola, Follow-up Questionnaire, 17.5.11)

FINAL THOUGHTS

As stated above, what I had sought externally, I now have the means to find within myself through awareness practices such as mindfulness and journaling. I now recognise and believe that peace can only come from within and once sourced within, can be maintained even in the face of external chaos. 'You find peace not by rearranging the circumstances of your life, but by realizing who you are at the deepest level'. (Tolle, 2003:52)

'The believer' in me is extremely satisfied that this journey has 'proven' that belief pays off and that people (I) can heal through the techniques experimented with in this thesis. 'The Protector' is also present, but far less negative, and with a greater understanding of my own potential and the different dimensions 'reality', and staying 'real', can take on. I end this thesis journey far more in balance between these 2 parts of me, and far less in battle.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: BEHIND EVERY SMILE

Song lyrics by Sarah Bates, 2006.

How come behind every smile, there is your sad eyes?
 How come behind every laugh, there is your sad life?
 And what do you do, when your baby wants to take his own life?
 What do you do when your baby's heart is so full hate?
 How come, you're always left behind?

Why can't you cry, when your babies can't find their way home?
 Why don't you cry, when your babies are missing from their beds?
 And how do you breathe when he's knocked all the air out of you?
 How do you breathe, with his weight bearing down on you?
 Is it any wonder that you're always in despair... You're in despair.

And I'll let you to raise your head, face another day.
 I'll tell you to raise the bar, live another way...
 What do I know? What do I know?

Now you're missing, I can't find you, you've gone missing.
 I can't find you, you're missing.
 Do you even know where you are?
 Do you even know how you are?
 Do you even know who you are?

In despair.
 I'm in despair.
 I'm in despair.
 In despair.

APPENDIX 2: REMEMBER**Song Lyrics by Sarah Bates, 2011**

Trying to remember, a forgotten love, a sound I used to make.

Trying to remember, why I gave up so much, why I created this space.

I'm trying to remember, a dream I used to have, I want to hold it again.

Trying to locate, that part of me, that fades in and then fades out.

Trying to locate, the Believer in me, the Screamer in me.

I'm trying to remember, where I lost my faith, 'cause I can't feel it no more.

APPENDIX 3: TYPES OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

The following are a selection of some the most well known Mindfulness practices.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing on its own is a mindfulness practice and it is also usually the starting point and accompaniment for all other mindfulness exercises. ‘Awareness of the breath is the essence of mindfulness’. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:x)

Mindful breathing is when you pay attention to how the breath enters your body and leaves it; where you feel the breath, air, in your body – your nose, mouth, throat, chest, belly. The aim of any mindfulness practice is not to relax, unlike some other meditation practices, but to simply become aware. The aim is to feel and focus on the breath within the body, not to change it.

*When you pay attention to your in-breath and out-breath, you **bring yourself home** to the present moment, to the here and the now, and you are in touch with life. If you were to continue to be lost in the past or run to the future, you’d miss all of that.*

(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:5)

When using mindful breathing you can introduce images/sayings to occupy your mind and to enhance the experience and potential for release for your body. For example:

*‘Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.
Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.
As my in-breath grows deep,
My out-breath grows slow.
Breathing in, I calm my body,
Breathing out I feel at ease.
Breathing in, I smile,
Breathing out, I release.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment’.* (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:7)

You can then reduce the sayings to single words which have meaning –

*‘In, Out.
Deep, Slow.
Calm, Ease.
Smile, Release.
Present Moment, Wonderful Moment’.* (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:8)

‘The breath is never ‘my breath’ – it does not belong to us. It is in some way greater than us, and it brings us life’. (Hughes, 2010:11) One of the most important things our breath can teach us is that we are not in control, and acceptance of that and the fact that our physical lives will end has the potential to teach us how and why to be present, and to open ourselves up to the joy that can be found in any moment, which can be accessed through the breath.

It can be very liberating to bring awareness to the breath and to discover that you don't have to control it...We can forget that at the deepest level we are not ultimately in control of our life. (Hughes, 2010:12)

Body Scan

The body scan was the first practice along with Mindful Breathing that I learnt in the Mindfulness group. ‘In this meditation, you will explore mindfulness of the body by “sweeping your body – scanning it with your attention’’. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:74)

A body scan is where you start by drawing your attention to the breath and then move your attention through your body, usually starting at the feet or at the head. You move your awareness through each part of your body slowly, acknowledging all and any sensations as you go along. In relation to your thinking, you allow your thoughts to pass through, without judgement (a very hard thing to do) and maintain and return focus to the body. Body scans can be done sitting or lying.

For me, the ‘homework’ of doing the body scan was met with huge resistance. It felt very unnatural and uncomfortable, but as the weeks passed it became something quite relaxing and peaceful – although the resistance to make the time and space for it still remained.

Sitting Meditation

Sitting meditations are done while sitting and pay more attention to all senses and experiences – noises, smells, feelings, thoughts, body sensations.

Sitting meditation is very healing. We can just be with whatever is within us, whether it is pain, anger, irritation, joy, love, or peace. We are whatever is there without being carried away. We let it come, let it stay, then let it go...This is the purpose of sitting: being here, fully alive and fully present. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:9)

Sarah Bates, ‘Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry’. 2011.

The goal is not necessarily to sit the way we image a meditative pose to be – i.e. legs crossed in lotus position, hands in prayer position etc, - instead we are encouraged to keep our backs straight, in order to be able to breathe more freely; keep our feet grounded; leave our hands loose in our lap; and find our most comfortable, sustainable position. You then focus within and pay attention to your body, very much like the body scan, and try not to label or judge any of the sensations – just be aware.

To be mindful of your body means being aware nonconceptually of the present-moment experience. Being mindful does not mean having a particular idea or concept about the physical experience and labelling it as such...You are aware of the actual direct physical experience as opposed to concepts or stories of what you might think your hands (etc) are. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:67)

Like all Mindfulness practices the breath is at the essence of the experience. ‘With the energy of mindfulness and breathing, you embrace your body and your mind’. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:11)

I found that on my own I had been unable to engage in mindful sitting meditations for more than 15 minutes. When in the group environment, during the Mindfulness course sessions, I found I could sit for much longer periods of time. The aftermath of emotion, usually manifesting as ‘depression’ was always much worse the day after I had my group. This was due to the amount of time spent meditating and, I now believe, that the healing energy created in a small group of people is far more powerful than that created when I’m on my own – I see this in the same way as giddiness or laughter can be contagious in groups of people.

Mindful Movement

During the Mindfulness course we engaged in Mindful Yoga, where we brought our attention inward and paid witness to the different sensations in our bodies and the different messages our body gave us, while slowly moving in and out, and holding, basic yoga poses. For the first time I really connected with a Mindfulness practice and enjoyed it. I think it is probably because there was a physical activity involved that I found it easier to pay attention to the present moment and to my body.

The practice was introduced on a night when I had been feeling very low for a number of days, and I left the session that night, feeling much lighter and content with myself and with 'Mindfulness'.

It was a relief that the mindful practice helped me as I was worried that the mindfulness was not bringing anything good into my life...The yoga gave me hope that if the body is the entry point to these fears perhaps it is always a method of healing and releasing.
(Journal Entry – 25.2.11)

A different example of Mindful movement is 'Walking Meditation', where you slow down your walking movement so that you can pay attention to the sensation of every step and every sensation - the way you move your weight from one foot to the other; from one part of the foot to another part; the way your body shifts; your breathing as you walk; the sensation of moving. 'The important thing is to discover the pace you connect with, the pace that allows you to be most mindful'. (Smalley & Winston, 2010:74)

Mindful walking is easiest when you have a clear given space/ground to walk in/on which can be indoors or outdoors.

Walking meditation is walking just to enjoy walking. Walking without arriving, that is the technique/...only in this moment, in this place, can life be possible. We have already arrived.
(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009:13/14)

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

A narrative interview is a communicative talking and feeling space where experience is being shared between interviewer and interviewee. The following is a topic guideline. It is not meant to limit the content of the conversation but simply provide a guide to ensure the research topics are covered. Narrative interview is unlike traditional structured interviews in that there are no set questions and two-way unscripted conversation is encouraged.

TOPICS RELATING TO THE RESEARCH

- MINDFULNESS & MINDFUL PRACTICES
- PERSONAL JOURNALING
- SELF CARE AND WELL-BEING
- OCCUPATION
- REFLECTIVE PRACTICES
- NARRATIVE

APPENDIX 5: INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM

LEARNING HOW TO BE STILL

'Learning to Stand Still' is a research project to be submitted in June 2011 as part of a Masters in Adult Guidance and Counselling from the National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2011.

Research conducted by Sarah Bates.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to build on the identified link between lack of effective self-care and the possibility of a physical manifestation of this lack of care in the form of physical illness. The research aims to explore two possible techniques that can be used to enhance people's self-awareness, self-care and well-being. The techniques focused on are a) Mindfulness and Mindful Practices, and b) personal journaling.

The approach being taken to the research is that of a 'Narrative Inquiry' – meaning the researcher is interested in telling the story of, and behind, the research, and recording the stories of others in relation to the research topics.

Interview participants will be asked to engage in a narrative interview which in essence is a meaningful conversation about their personal journey and stories of using Mindfulness and Mindful practices and journaling in their personal and professional lives.

A small number of narrative interviews are being conducted with chosen people known to the researcher as having experience with Mindfulness and Mindfulness practices and/or journaling.

CONSENT

A copy of the consent form is sent to potential interviewees before the time of their interview so that they be will informed and have time to consider what is being asked of them before the time of interview.

Consent will be obtained verbally at the time of commencing the interview.

Written consent will then be requested once the interview is complete – at this time the interviewee can raise any concerns they have about the material given in the interview.

Sarah Bates, 'Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry'. 2011.

A copy of the transcript will be sent to the interviewee which will be followed up by a phone call. At this time the interviewee can ask for amendments to be made regarding consent or identify information that they do not want used in the research. The interviewee can also postpone signing the original consent form until they have had an opportunity to read through and consider the transcript. There is also an opportunity at this time for the interviewee to change or add to the information given.

Once given, consent can be withdrawn at any time up to the date of submission – June 10th. A final phone call and email will be made in early June to ensure the interviewee is still willing to be included in the research.

With consent from the interviewee, interviews will be recorded using a dictaphone.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Each interviewee will be asked to consider if they wish to be named or to be kept anonymous. If they choose to remain anonymous, all efforts will be made to take out any identifying information from the final research.

Once the thesis is submitted it will be read by two internal assessors belonging to the Maynooth faculty and also by an independent external supervisor. However, once a thesis is complete and graded it is in the public domain and may be read by anyone.

A copy of the transcribed interview will be given to the interviewee and can be requested, along with a copy of the recording, for up to 3 years after the interview date. This data will at all times be kept secure.

If use of an interviewee's transcript is considered for future publications, the interviewee will be contacted and consent will be requested at that time. Interviewees can at any time, in relation to future work, refuse to have their transcripts used as a source of research.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The interviews do not constitute any form of counselling and it is the interviewee's responsibility to seek support should issues arise that require attention after the interview process. The researcher would be happy to assist in sourcing appropriate support options.

Sarah Bates, 'Learning How to be Still: A Narrative Inquiry'. 2011.

LEARNING HOW TO BE STILL**INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM**

Interviewee's name: _____

Age/age bracket (50's): _____

Occupation: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please read the following and after careful consideration circle the appropriate answers.

- I am over 18

Yes

No

- Do you give permission for the interview to be recorded via a dictaphone?

Yes

No

- Do you prefer to be identified and named as, _____
(put in person's name and title), in the final research, or be anonymous with all identifying information being removed from the final research?

Named

Anonymous

- Are you aware that once the thesis is complete and graded it is in the public sphere and can be read by anyone?

Yes

No

- Are you open to being contacted in the future about the possible use of your interview transcript for future publications?

Yes

No

(Ticking 'Yes' does not constitute consent regarding inclusion in future publications)

- Have you read and understood all of the above?

Yes

No

- Any others considerations you would like to attach to this consent form –

- In consideration of all the above are you willing to have the transcript of your interview (with any amendments agreed) included in the final research piece?

Yes

No

- Are you open to being contacted in the future with additional questions from the researcher in relation to your interview?

Yes

No

- I would like to receive a report on the findings of this research?

Yes

No

Interviewee signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher signature: _____

Date: _____

TO BE FILLED IN BY RESEARCHER

Date transcript was sent to interviewee _____

Was consent renewed? Yes No Date _____

Date of 'final' call/email regarding consent _____

Was consent renewed? Yes No No Response

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE

CHECKLIST BEFORE STARTING

- Consent form
- Do not need to answer all questions
- Pen and paper

START

- Introduce selves & relationship
- Consent form
- Feeling and thinking

MINDFULNESS & MINDFUL PRACTICES

- Your understanding
- Your story
 - first learnt & used
 - Personal & Professional life
 - In summary, What you get

PERSONAL JOURNALING

SELF CARE AND WELL-BEING

- Your understanding
- Your story
- Importance of – personal & professional
- Story of not taking care

OCCUPATION

- Relationship with other topics

REFLEXIVE PRACTICES

- Your understanding
- Your story, experience
- Value in personal & professional

NARRATIVE

- Your understanding
- Your story, experience
- Significance in personal & professional
- Experience of this interview – other interviews

END

- Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important?
- Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX 7: LETTER TO GOD**Song lyrics by Sarah Bates, 2002**

It's been awhile, since I saw your face in my dreams.
It's been awhile, since I heard you sing in the dark.
And it's been awhile, since I felt your breath on my skin.
Now I'm beginning to wonder, were you ever real at all.

As a child, I believed all you had said.
As a child, I blindly hoped you'd always be there.
And as a child, I listen for your voice in the rain.
Now I'm beginning to wonder, where you ever here at all.

Save me, Save me.
(I will save you from yourself)

I remember fearing all the promises you had made.
I remember crying silent tears that went unheard.
I remember searching for you under every stone.
Now I'm beginning to wonder, will you ever come again.
Come again.

TRANSCRIPT 1: INTERVIEW WITH NICOLA, 11.3.11

1	Sarah:	So thanks for agreeing to do this Nicola.
2	Nicola:	No problem.
3	Sarah:	So just to begin. I just want to check that you have read and you understand the Consent Form?
4	Nicola:	Yeah. I do, yeah.
5	Sarah:	And you'd be happy enough to sign it here today. And you know yourself, that, should you change your mind at any time up to it actually being submitted, you can, you can pull out and you don't have to be part of the research.
6	Nicola:	Yeah.
7	Sarah:	You also don't have to answer...like if the conversation goes somewhere that you don't want to be, that's no problem, just say it and we'll come back to, to something else. (Okay) And are you okay with me having pen and paper, just to take the occasional notes? (Yeah, of course) Thanks very much. Okay, would you mind just introducing yourself kind of, for the tape, just to say who you are and what our relationship is.
8	Nicola:	Okay, so...do I...like introduce myself as in, do I say like work-wise or anything or...?
9	Sarah:	Just who you who are...and...you know, and what you do and just what your relationship with me is...like honestly, truthfully what your relationship is.
10	Nicola:	Okay. Well, I'm Nicola (laugh). I am not working at the moment but I have....previously worked as a waitress and a complementary therapist. And I am....doing a course in Illustration for children's books and that's my main...(occupation)...thing, at the moment. And...I am...a friend of yours...for 10 years or more (laugh). Yeah.
11	Sarah:	That's great. So, I'm Sarah, the researcher and I've asked Nicola to do this because I know that she has some knowledge around mindfulness and journaling and because she is my friend and I trust her to tell me the truth and to help me out. So thanks Nicola for that. Right so, I, I...I suppose just before going in. Narrative interview is all about just really capturing stories, (yeah) including the story of the interview. (Okay) So I suppose it's important to acknowledge where we are right now. I'm feeling a wee bit agitated, just would have liked to have turned off my phone (laugh) but happy to be here, delighted that I'm getting this done and just hoping that it all goes okay. You might...feel a bit nervous about being interviewed or being on tape.
12	Nicola:	Yeah, a little bit, but...
13	Sarah:	A bit of nerves going on.
14	Nicola:	Yeah. (Grand)

15	Sarah:	So, just to begin then. Would you mind if we began just talking about mindfulness and mindful practices?
16	Nicola:	Oh no, that sounds like a good place to start.
17	Sarah:	So what would your understanding of mindfulness be?
18	Nicola:	I suppose...I never read a definition or anything. I just imagine it's kind of something similar to....meditation but a very kind of a personal thing. Self-awareness...that's what I imagine. I don't know, I think it's probably something that you...practice at so that you can, like, it can kind of become part of your life, it's not like you just say 'I'm going to my mindfulness class or CD', it's like, the idea is to...kind of, bring about a change or somehow improve your own...way of living by using it.
19	Sarah:	Yeah.
20	Nicola:	So that it becomes...yeah, something that you do, kind of automatically or whatever.
21	Sarah:	So it becomes part of you rather than something you study for an hour or 2. (Yeah) And you mention practices, do you have any idea what practices are mindful?
22	Nicola:	I would just think of something like meditation or.... I don't know, just...just maybe doing something that you find...sort of relaxes you or brings you back to...reality. Like I don't know if its...sometimes...if you just sit like at the beach or go to the park or something, you just....I don't know really (laugh).
23	Sarah:	Is that what you do for you? (Yes) And it's your story.
24	Nicola:	Yes. Something like that. Yeah.
25	Sarah:	So, so would those be examples of real things you would do, in your own life?
26	Nicola:	Yeah. I suppose so, being in nature or...sometimes even, I can...something like, I have a CD of circle dancing and sometimes I, I will do that.
27	Sarah:	Tell me more about that.
28	Nicola:	Well, it's, it's like...there's certain steps to these dances. They're very simple and you...they're done in a group with other people and you just follow the, the steps. But...some of them are based on like Bach flower remedies so they have particular...whatever the Bach flower remedy is meant to like...help you with or whatever, the...doing the steps is meant to be the same. And then there's some of them that are sort of Native American dances and some of them are just called nature dances. And I, personally I...the least favourite for me would be the....stop me if I'm going on too much about this....(I will)....the ones, the Bach flower ones, because I don't know, just personally they don't, I don't like them as much. I just prefer the ones that are more nature-y or Native American...they're more to do with...I don't know things like 'Rainforest' and 'Meditation to the Trees' and I suppose that's more me.
29	Sarah:	And what is it about those ones that for you seems better? Is it feelings or...?

30	Nicola:	It's probably the music and the, the movements as well. But, because sometimes with the other ones, with...it's almost like, I don't know this is just my opinion like, that they thought it out too much and maybe the nature ones just are bit more flow-y and a bit more connected to nature. Whereas the other ones where they're thinking about 'well, this White Chestnut or whatever is to do with...such a thing, (specific) so then they sort of, 'these are the steps now you have to....', you know you're going back over things but then you're taking a step forward. And you know, it's probably, it's probably good but.... And I do like them but it's just that the more nature ones...and probably as well it's because...the music and the drumming in the, in the Native American ones, sort of, I connect with more or something. (Yeah, yeah) But I really, like...I haven't been to the group for...maybe almost a year but occasionally...when, yeah occasionally I'll just take out the CDs, not be very often but kind of when....I couldn't settle down to, like to do something still but I felt I need to do something that would make me feel a bit better. And so that's that.
31	Sarah:	And does it work, for you?
32	Nicola:	Yeah. It does work. It...I knew that I'd feel better after doing it and because I moving I wasn't...and just going with the music, I wasn't so much stressing out or feeling...bad. Maybe initially, but then you just....I kind of just kind of say 'just stick with it, do it for another little while' and then, you kind of know you'll feel a bit better...well I do.
33	Sarah:	And do you have any idea what it is that actually happens...for you?
34	Nicola:	Part of it is probably that it...because you're focusing on that thing and...that I don't know maybe the other part of your brain has to shut down. It doesn't really allow that to, to come in so much because, because...you have to, you know you have to follow this movement. It's like, I don't know, I just remember reading about meditation before and like the way you repeat a word or you stare at a flame. But then if you keep on doing that you're engaging the right part of your brain or maybe I'm in the wrong side (laugh) but...it, it means that the other stuff that's going on that's normally, if you're having trouble with your thoughts or something...that's in the other side of the brain, so...that's sort of shut out. So I think, it's, the dance is more...even though there's certain steps, you're not just being spontaneous, making up your own, it is a more creative side, so it is more that side of your brain. I think. (Yeah, yeah) Now I don't know, because I'm only just thinking this out right now so I don't know but...
35	Sarah:	That would make sense. And just by focusing on something else that you kind of associate with being positive, you quieten, whatever it was that you were trying to change.
36	Nicola:	Yeah. Yeah. (Yeah)
37	Sarah:	Would you ever have used any of those kind of techniques or that kind of thinking when you were working? Or any type of...what could be associated (yeah) with mindful practices.
38	Nicola:	I don't know if like affirmations would be mindful. (Yeah) I would have. A lot. Particularly one time, when...I was waitressing for too long, as usual. And, and I had

		only kind of started reading this positive book, that I just felt was really good, and yeah, it really made an impression on me, so I kind of started using affirmations. And, do you know the book 'You Can Heal Your Life'? (I've heard, yes, yeah) Well there's one part that she, that she writes about where if you say 'I approve of myself' for a whole month, it will really have an effect. You've to keep saying it over and over and over. So like I tried it, when I was working in the café, one time. And...just constantly saying this. And I was, would always find there was a particular girl working in the kitchen that I found hard to deal with. But I, I just found that it was easier...while this was going on. Like I'd go down, and I'd, just before I'd give her the order, because she'd always have a problem with the orders I gave her...even though she sort of said in a jokey way, she still always said it, you know?
39	Nicola:	So...yeah I just felt that it was...a little bit easier and I don't know whether it was because I was just being positive myself, that I was just feeling stronger, or whether...(I'm taking a note 'cause I must try that) that's okay. Or whether....that I was acting a bit differently and she picked up in it, I don't know, which it was, but either way it did help for a while but it just wasn't....yeah it was on the kind of, the mental level and so it wasn't ever kind of going to work, for a long time with me...because there was too much beneath it, do you know, more spiritual or emotional. So, it would only work, it would only kind of temporarily work with me. But I would have tried it again at times. And I think it, it probably helped a bit. Yeah, better than not saying them. Yeah, and even just saying it would be just, trying, kind of...getting me to think like, 'you don't...', just to snap out of the negative stuff, even if it's not really working, just maybe saying it just...
40	Sarah:	It's refocusing again. (Yeah, yeah)
41	Nicola:	So I suppose it works at some, at some level.
42	Sarah:	And you found that helpful in a work situation...for a while?
43	Nicola:	Yeah. For a while. Yeah.
44	Sarah:	Would you ever journal? Do you ever write?
45	Nicola:	Yeah...sometimes. I would have, before like...probably almost..10 years ago. (Yeah) But a lot of it was...very...probably not the way...I know, journaling probably, it depends on the person, but it would probably be a bit too...fact-y like, you know like 'I went here and I went there'. Yeah, it was probably very to do....sorry. It was probably, a whole lot of it wasn't to do with how I was feeling. Maybe, maybe I thought it was, but it wasn't really. It was more anxieties, I was writing down anxieties, I suppose that is how your feeling, but more, more mental stuff, than, yeah, so I suppose it probably was journaling in a way. (Yeah) But...
46	Sarah:	It's like...you seem to be nearly having an argument in your own head about whether, about what journaling is and about what you did, whether it was journaling. (Yeah) So, for you, what does journaling mean? What does the word mean?
47	Nicola:	I suppose, kind of reflective writing. But, and that's all I know about...
48	Sarah:	And when you were journaling....what, how would you describe that, what was it?

49	Nicola:	Yeah, I suppose why I'm thinking I was doing it wrong or it wasn't right is because, I, sometimes would write now. And I suppose I'm just comparing and thinking that was very different. So it was probably just where I was at that point (yeah) and that was the kind of journaling I did then and now I would write in a different way. And probably, in another year, if I was to look back on what I was writing now, I would probably write again differently and I would probably think 'God I thought I was so....aware then, but really...look how...', you know...
50	Sarah:	But then and now do you see progression? Is that what you mean by different?
51	Nicola:	Yeah, in terms of writing or...journaling?
52	Sarah:	Just you said 'if I looked back', it'd be very different to what you're writing now so, how does it differ?
53	Nicola:	Yeah probably....it probably differs (laugh), because it didn't feel....it was more of a release sort of writing, and it was just writing down anxieties, getting them out. Whereas it was more, if I write now it's more....maybe, like...it depends because it could be very trivial. I could just write about silly things or...but...no it's all relevant really (laugh). Because I could write...about things that are pretty silly but I just write them because...they make me smile and that's good (laugh). So, I write them down and I think...this...yeah, this'll cheer me up if I turn back a few pages in a few weeks or in a year or something. And then, more things would be, would be that I'd write about, would be just realisations I have, or how I can write something and think...and see it as progression from something else and just to be 'okay this is today or whatever and this is progress from, from another day..' and you know yeah, just to, (laugh) it probably just helps me stay where I am...be in the now. (Yeah) I'm probably gone off the actual question (laugh).
54	Sarah:	Not at all actually. You're completely on point.
55	Nicola:	But that's kind of...what my...little ramble (laugh)...
56	Sarah:	So in the past journaling could be quite, factual, and it was about releasing anxieties. And now it can take different forms. You can be writing something that's going to make you smile. Or you're writing in order to, kind of mark where you're at, and progressions (yeah) and to hold onto the present.
57	Nicola:	Yeah. And also....sort of more, in a way, like I don't want to sound really, (laugh) like...oh God, I don't even know the word, but like self-obsessed or something...but more in a kind of a self-discovery way of writing. (Yeah) Whereas before it was very...yeah, it was more....I, you couldn't probably tell the difference from page to page, because it was very...more rigid or...just, whatever.
58	Sarah:	So...anyway this is your story so there's no...not at all, you're not confusing me. So there's no right or wrong or, you know, being self-obsessed or anything because it's about you so...(laugh). You're saying that writing now can be kind of a process of self-discovery. Can you tell me more about that?
59	Nicola:	Yeah. Well, I suppose, sometimes like, I might write down something that I...did that day or something that particularly stood out or made me happy and then, then I'll sort

		of realise 'oh, that's, that's like...' here I go with the word again (laugh) but 'that's progress again' you know. So it's like, discovery, yeah just discovering....more about myself. Whereas before it would probably have been more...suppressed and my...personality was kind of...in the background or something, so it's just that if I'm writing things about, what was good from the day or what upset me from the day or, a strange little thought I had, it's just all piecing together more for me 'well, these are my likes, these are my dislikes, this is what I think about something...' or.... Yeah. Maybe self-discovery was...being too...big. But...
60	Sarah:	But you're getting information about yourself. (Yeah) And is it, is it the writing...and you end up writing something that you didn't really know? Or is it writing what you know and then reading it back and is that where the, like is that where the information is, is it seeing it on paper, or is it the actual process of writing?
61	Nicola:	I think it's the process....first of all, because....I would think, yeah, because if I didn't sit down and write it, I wouldn't necessarily think about it and figure it out or....
62	Sarah:	Fill in the dots?
63	Nicola:	Yeah, like I might sit down and I might start thinking about something from the day, but 2 seconds later I'll be thinking about 'I have to buy a bulb' or 'oh, I wonder (laugh) how many birds are singing in the tree', or whatever. So it's just taking the time and just sitting down and just doing that and that being the only thing that you're doing and that you're focusing on. So if you're writing it, you're going to keep doing it. It's going to keep you in that. But if I was just to try and think about it, there's probably no way that I could do it, it's just the fact that I'm moving, doing, physically, that helps me stay. And sometimes I will read back over it, and...yeah, that just kind of...(re-affirms it) re-affirms it, but already...because I've written it I've kind of...
64	Sarah:	So sometimes you wouldn't even have a need to read back over. You'd have got whatever learning you got.
65	Nicola:	Yeah. But sometimes I would go back a few days and read...and, yeah, it would probably just re-affirm again because even if, if you do it quite often, you can easily forget a few days ago.
66	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, easy forget your learning. And, the doing seems to be the bit that anchors you in the present (yeah) and holds you (yeah). So sounds like you use it for quite personal stuff. (Yeah) And personal, I just mean your own rather than work stuff.
67	Nicola:	Yeah. Well I guess because I'm not...working at the moment. But I would...yeah I would sometimes write a bit about how it's going or not going with my (art) art stuff, yeah. But not, not a whole lot...at the moment but...
68	Sarah:	Yeah. Would you ever have written about the café or the massage?
69	Nicola:	Not really. I think I might have for, for a while...with the café but not...really. I think when I was, when I did write things before, it was probably a time when I wasn't working, so I had more time to do it. But I, I do remember coming across some, some things I'd written before and there was mentions of (work) when I was in the café and stuff like that. But....not a whole lot.

70	Sarah:	And do you feel that if you were working that maybe you mightn't be journaling, due to time?
71	Nicola:	Yeah, maybe. But, I don't know because I'm more...I've only, sort of started writing things again, in the last while, so...maybe now I would say...
72	Sarah:	So it might not be related to work it's more...timing in yourself rather than...
73	Nicola:	Yeah but...but because it feels important at the moment, I think probably if I was to be working, that, that...I probably would write still sometimes...(yeah, yeah)..because, yeah, because it just feels important at the moment so, I think it would probably...particularly if I started working now...you know, any time that you start work and there's new stuff and there's new people, it just...it just makes, well for me, I'd probably be more...there'd just be a lot going on in your head and in every way. (Yeah) So I'd probably be afraid of...whatever, sort of...I don't know, self-awareness or whatever I was getting from the...writing, that that would somehow be diminished...with all the stuff going on. So I think I would probably feel important that I still do it.
74	Sarah:	And do you feel that it's important now? (Yeah) Where does that feeling come from?
75	Nicola:	I don't know (laugh)...it just...
76	Sarah:	Is it from within...do you know? (Yeah) Or is it external?
77	Nicola:	I don't really understand feelings being external or maybe it's just, maybe I'm...
78	Sarah:	Oh, no, no. Well, I suppose...it's, you said that it's feeling important now, like now, as in in this time, (yeah) to be writing. And I'm wondering is that feeling, is it something that just rises up within or is it because somebody said it...that's what I mean by external, like (oh) is it initiated because (no) so-and-so said 'God you should try writing' or, like where does that feeling come from?
79	Nicola:	Well actually, I know it came from....a particular day that, that was very significant (laugh). So...I just felt, it was almost like a day that felt...it just felt like a big day, and that I...wasn't....that I was turning my back on something. And so it was like 'this is a new start' sort of a feeling. So then I just had this urge to go and buy a notebook. And then I just started to write sometimes in it. So, I just, I don't know, maybe it just felt like...this is a new phase, so....then I once I wrote in it, it was like the feeling of wanting to hold on to it, or to just to connect back in with that feeling. So maybe that's what the physical writing just helps me to stay.
80	Sarah:	The feeling of moving on or moving away from something else?
81	Nicola:	Yeah, yeah. Being in a, being in a new phase.
82	Sarah:	A new phase. A new beginning.
83	Nicola:	Yeah. I don't know that just seems a bit...(laugh)

84	Sarah:	No, that's deadly. Great that journaling can do something like that, do you know or...that it can be that deep, that you can just know that you want to...journal.
85	Nicola:	Yeah. (laugh) Yeah and actually, this just....I'm probably gone off the point but...I wouldn't be...rich and I wouldn't be very good about spending money, but I just felt like it had to be a good notebook. So it was like more than 20 euro that I spent on a notebook and I don't know how long it will last me but I just felt 'you need to get a nice, good notebook, that you need', like it was an important thing. (Yeah) So.
86	Sarah:	So, so just to summarize...what do you get from journaling, that, right now, what comes to mind?
87	Nicola:	Sort of...like...a connection with myself or something. (Yeah) Yeah, I won't say positive because it may not always be positive, so just a connection. (Lovely) Or...but often it is...a more positive thing. And even if there is...negative things in it, I see it as positive, because it's awareness. (Yeah, yeah, yeah) And in that sense, it's valuable.
88	Sarah:	So, for you, any awareness or any added awareness is of benefit even if it's not necessarily positive or negative.
89	Nicola:	Yeah, oh, yeah.
90	Sarah:	Thanks.
91	Nicola:	Okay.
92	Sarah:	What would your....when I say self-care or wellbeing to you, what would those words mean to you?
93	Nicola:	Self-care. I suppose, just looking after yourself on all levels, like, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual (laugh). That's what I would think. Yeah, like...having, probably like a balanced lifestyle and trying to be....trying to achieve...health in those areas. That's really all I can think of.
94	Sarah:	And does wellbeing have a different meaning? Or is it a word you would use at all?
95	Nicola:	Wellbeing. Yeah, I guess so. I just, I would just think about....feeling, like, at your best, in all ways.
96	Sarah:	Yeah, so wellbeing would equal feeling at your best, and then self-care would be trying to ensure that you're balancing health across the four...(yeah) categories you named?
97	Nicola:	I suppose just taking the steps towards wellbeing, would probably be what I'd see self-care as.
98	Sarah:	So self-care is the process to wellbeing?
99	Nicola:	Yeah? (laugh)

100	Sarah:	That wellbeing would be the result, if you did it well.
101	Nicola:	Yeah.
102	Sarah:	Would you place importance in your own life on your own self-care and wellbeing.
103	Nicola:	Yes (laugh), definitely.
104	Sarah:	And how would you do that?
105	Nicola:	Well...personally, it would...it's like, the main reason for my life...for the last...long time. But... Yeah, so....going for healing would be, would be the biggest thing for me, because I find all of those aspects would come into that. Yeah, so...like I was saying, like the emotional, spiritual...(yeah) pretty much, all....
106	Sarah:	So one of the things you would do for yourself is to attend healing.
107	Nicola:	Yeah.
108	Sarah:	And are there other things you'd do...on a day to day basis?
109	Nicola:	Yeah, I would like...I would always have...like I have a book with a daily meditation, and it's not that I can really...well I don't practice it so maybe I could if I tried, but I don't....sorry, so slow with the words...I don't really...I can't really seem to like, lie down, close my eyes and meditate, keep my mind....focusing on a particular positive thought or whatever it may be. So, I have, I would just read the meditation for the day (yeah) and I might read it...twice or three times, and...yeah, I just have a very kind of a slow start to the morning. So it's kind of a very peaceful time when I read that.
110	Nicola:	And sometimes I would do, like a....I suppose it is a kind of a meditation....just...yeah, but the way I do it, I know as I'm doing it, I say to myself 'you're probably not doing this the proper way because you're meant to be breathing in a particular way', but I just find it very difficult so...I just do it my own way. And even if my, even if I'm thinking about a thousand things while I'm doing it...I just keep trying to...yeah, it's just to bring light in to your....self. And I don't always...like, you kind of focus on the chakras but I don't always do that, so... Sometimes then I realise 'oh I'm thinking, I was meant to be on my throat and I completely forgot', but I just keep breathing or remind myself and it could be...could take twenty times longer than it's ideally meant to take (laugh), but...yeah and then I, still might feel 'I didn't do that right' or 'I didn't really concentrate too well there' but, the fact that I tried is, is a good thing. Because, you know, some...you're still sitting there being silent and....and...it's probably a practice, in some way, for the next time.
111	Sarah:	Yeah. And you're building on what you've already done. (Yeah) And....you're kind of saying that, the doing is important, even if the focus, mental focus isn't necessarily there, that at least you're doing it. And you're also kind of saying that there is a right and a wrong way?
112	Nicola:	Yeah. Well...I don't really have the...the patience, maybe it's not the patience, I don't

		<p>know, but...the idea is that, you know, you start and you breathe a certain way and you focus on your heart and you imaging certain things and I just find that hard. Sometimes I can't see the things, sometimes I just, the breathing is sort of...difficult to do or it's...or, or I can't, yeah, I just can't seem to breathe that way some days. So I'll just close my eyes and just try and do it my own way (laugh) ...and, yeah, so....the way I say the right way, is probably, I don't know, whether if I tried longer and kept trying to breathe....I start finding the breathing uncomfortable. And....I know if you practice it's meant to come naturally but it...maybe I'm just not practicing enough, or hard or long enough or whatever. But it just feels, for me, it just feels easier to just breathe the way I normally breathe.</p>
113	Sarah:	And does that feel right-er?
114	Nicola:	<p>Yeah that feels right-er (laugh) and, yeah, so. Yeah, what I try and do, is not, if it's not, if I'm not doing it the way I'm thinking I'm supposed to do it...I just say to myself 'well look, you're doing it, your own way', and, (yeah) you know, 'it's better than nothing', (yeah) 'maybe the right way isn't the right way for you' (laugh). (Yeah, yeah) Or maybe I'm just not trying and doing it, learning it as I should or practicing every day, so if I did maybe I would get way more benefit. But, for where I am at the moment, to just be sitting still and thinking about doing this is enough. (Yeah)</p>
115	Sarah:	And you say benefit. Are there benefits from it, are you finding, yourself?
116	Nicola:	<p>I don't really notice the difference in the day that I do it and that I don't do it. But, I...and even if it's not benefitting in the sense that it's making me more mindful or whatever, throughout the day, I think the fact that if I, even if I have that moment or that short while of stillness or....yeah, stillness, even if my mind isn't still, it still has to be a good thing to do, to just take a little bit of quiet time...because it's in the morning and it's normally still...not that bright and I always, I don't like lights on in the morning time so it's a peaceful, more peaceful time. So if I was to not do it at that time of the day I would probably end up just turning on the light, getting dressed, having a shower and already starting the day, you know, so...(laugh)</p>
117	Sarah:	So stillness is important to you and you believe that it, it has to be of some benefit. So what is it that you associate with stillness that is...so beneficial?
118	Nicola:	<p>I suppose it probably slows you down a bit and....gets...yeah, gets you thinking a bit more. But I can't really say that....I don't know, I never really thought about it a lot. (Yeah) I can't really say that I honestly believe that that is the way it is because I could often be just walking, (yeah) or on the bus, (yeah) or doing something and thinking a lot of things....that I might...think about when I was still so...I'm not really sure. (Yeah) But there's more of a peace about it, a peaceful feeling than if I was...so it depends, it depends.</p>
119	Sarah:	So it can bring about a peaceful feeling?
120	Nicola:	<p>Yeah. But equally....you know, if I was in the park for a little stroll it could be the same or it could be a stronger...feeling of peace. So I can't really say that the still....being still and trying to focus on something is....</p>
121	Sarah:	The only way to peace.

122	Nicola:	Yeah, and maybe, maybe it's not even the best way for me, right now. But...but I do still feel that it is of benefit.
123	Sarah:	Like is there a common denominator, like this peaceful feeling...comes up at times or after certain activities. Is there something...is there a common denominator? Or is it right time, right place?
124	Nicola:	I'm not really sure. I think...I suppose sometimes...it's to do with the surroundings and if it's in the outdoors like. And...sometimes it's just...yeah, in that situation, in nature or outside or else...being still. But like I was saying it could be when I'm on the bus. So, in a way I am still...it's a moment when I'm away from my normal routine of things, where I'm doing...focusing on my art or cleaning the house or whatever...it's more a time where I'm actually waiting for the bus or sitting on the bus or...something like that....taken away from the normal routine of things.
125	Sarah:	And giving you what instead?
126	Nicola:	Just more of a....more time to reflect actually, because it <i>can</i> , it <i>can</i> also be a bad thing...in a way. Because, for me...because if I'm occupied and doing something it's...you know it is what it is. But, sometimes like if there's particular things that are bothering me or whatever, like I would particularly find...if I <i>do</i> have to sit down for a long time, like for a train journey, it could be very difficult. So I really don't know if I'm just making knots here (laugh), getting very confusing with things. Because I <i>was</i> saying that it was to do...to be still and stuff was good but...
127	Sarah:	But you also said that sometimes you didn't experience it that way.
128	Nicola:	Yeah and sometimes it could be...it could be more of a bad thing, but...
129	Sarah:	And what do you think influences the good or that bad feelings, like it's the same scenario (yeah), like you're sitting on the bus...
130	Nicola:	It's just...having the space and the time to reflect and not having distractions, I mean big, obvious distractions. And....to actually not be...engaging in anything else really.
131	Sarah:	So you...kind of take...time-outs at different times of the day. You kind of have moments where you get to reflect. Would that be....or is it not so conscious?
132	Nicola:	Yeah, not so conscious. I suppose if I write something I would be reflecting. But, sometimes if I'm just walking somewhere I actually am probably reflecting an awful lot, but not really...
133	Sarah:	Consciously deciding to.
134	Nicola:	Yeah. And it's not....you know, it's not as...constant as...if I was writing something as well, because there would be...lots of other things that I would be thinking about, you know.
135	Sarah:	And would, do those moments have a relationship with your own self-care and wellbeing?

136	Nicola:	The moments where I....
137	Sarah:	Unconsciously seemed to be what you were describing was that you would find yourself in moments of stillness that maybe on a bus or in the middle of a walk. (Yeah) Are they relevant to your wellbeing or are they something else?
138	Nicola:	Oh, yeah. No, they're very relevant because.... Yeah because it's all kind of...helps me to...be more aware...of things. So, yeah, I think...I think so. (Yeah)
139	Sarah:	And have you ever had a time....it's obvious that you, you focus on your own wellbeing and your own...self-care quite a lot and that you begin your day quite purposefully, checking in within yourself and trying to do something that you perceive to be beneficial for yourself. (Yeah) Have there been times where you haven't done that for yourself.
140	Nicola:	Yeah. Probably for...yeah I would probably be only....maybe...reading the positive things in the morning and that kind of, starting the day that way, would probably be...I'd say 4 years, maybe 5. Not... So previous to that I wouldn't really have....no. No, maybe 5 or 6 years, I don't know. Not really...sure of the time. But there was probably, before that, maybe before I...had that particular book or whatever, where I did....a Reiki course or whatever, and I would maybe have done some of that in the morning before, particularly before I used to go to work in the café, I would do that. But before all that, I didn't do it...I never did it.
141	Sarah:	And before that all began, before that period where you were <i>consciously</i> choosing to do things for your own wellbeing, (yeah) would you have been engaging in stuff for your own wellbeing? Would it have been on the agenda?
142	Nicola:	No, apart from going to counselling, which would have been before that...
143	Sarah:	And was counselling a form of self-care?
144	Nicola:	Yeah, yeah.
145	Sarah:	And was there a time where you didn't? Like was there ever a time where your awareness of self-care and wellbeing wasn't, as good as it is now or wasn't on the important list?
146	Nicola:	Yeah....yeah probably for, for a long time. Yeah don't think about it when you're a child really...or maybe you kind of do automatically do it but you don't think...you don't realise. Yeah, it would probably only have been brought to my attention by my parents, so...then I was sort of forced into self-care (laugh). But...yeah, as...as I...progressed or whatever, it would have actually become important for me...for myself, not just....because I was told this or something. (Yeah, yeah)
147	Sarah:	So, kind of initially, when self-care started to come into your life as a conscious thing, it was something that was encouraged, or forced was the word you used, by others, onto you?
148	Nicola:	Yeah.

149	Sarah:	And then gradually it became something that you did for yourself.
150	Nicola:	Yes.
151	Sarah:	And...so say, Nicola who doesn't practice self-care and then Nicola who does, how, what would the differences be? How would it manifest itself? Or would it?
152	Nicola:	Well.....I'm just thinking that.....I don't know, it's like as though...this is not really answering your question but I'm just thinking now when you said that....that...self-care is probably changed a bit for me as well...because maybe before with the counselling and everything...I probably saw it, saw it in a different way. And I probably didn't really see it as self-care or maybe I just wouldn't have called it that, but it was more of a....like....not like....an answer or a cure or something, seeing it as like something that, yeah...not like, not like something that you need to always do like. A solution almost, seeing it as a solution. So not really, so.....
153	Sarah:	Seeing counselling as a solution? (Yeah) So an end in itself?
154	Nicola:	Yeah. Not really, so it wouldn't really have been self-care that...well possibly I thought this would be....I don't know, a year of self-care or whatever (yeah, yeah) but I wouldn't have thought in that way (laugh). It was more of a solution thing, and yeah.... So, sorry, you didn't ask me that at all.
155	Sarah:	No but...it just shows that, that wasn't...they were words I put on you. Was counselling a form of self-care, whereas it wasn't for you, you didn't see it that way. (No) It was...you were going to counselling to get a solution to A, whatever A is. (Yeah) And self-care is something different. (Yeah) Or came to mean something different.
156	Nicola:	Yeah, but it was only probably through the whole....process of <i>looking</i> for a solution, that it evolved into a self-care thing (laugh). Or possibly...self-care is a solution (laugh). (Yeah, yeah)
157	Sarah:	Well do you think that self-care is a solution?
158	Nicola:	Yeah. In a way, but I don't really believe in a solution sort of thing. It's more that self-care is important (laugh). (Okay) And....if you believe self-care is a solution it's as though you're thinking 'I'm going to stop this in a few...in a few weeks' because I'll have the solution'. Do you know what I mean? (Yeah) It's more of a...
159	Sarah:	So it's important then, on-going?
160	Nicola:	Yes. (Okay)
161	Sarah:	And solution would suggest that there's a problem. (Yeah) And, does self-care have to relate to a problem as such?
162	Nicola:	Well I guess everyone has a problem. And if, like...everyone goes into the world every day and lives their life, it's not...and if they're not really caring for themselves there's going to be problems, (yeah) you know, so...I can't remember what you asked

163	Sarah:	me initially. What was the original question? (Sorry, I'm just not...) No 'cause this is a conversation and what you're saying is interesting and valid. I suppose the question was...I suppose, like what would be different, if you...weren't doing what you were doing to self-care, (oh yeah) if you didn't...place importance on self-care. How would you be? Or how were you?
164	Nicola:	Very...I would be very unhealthy in all ways, because you know, I wasn't caring for myself at all...yeah I would be just very unhealthy, every way. And, then if you don't care for it, it just deteriorates, so...I would probably die.
165	Sarah:	And would it have been at that level of no self-care beforehand?
166	Nicola:	Yeah. Yeah.
167	Sarah:	So, kind of, that awareness, which was pushed on you initially...to look at looking after yourself, <i>could</i> have been the difference between becoming so unhealthy that you die or living a life where you get up in the morning and...first thing is to focus on something beneficial for yourself and (yeah) your body and your spirit. (Yeah) So it's huge, it's had huge relevance.
168	Nicola:	Yeah.
169	Sarah:	Would you understand the term reflexive, reflexive practices?
170	Nicola:	Like reflective?
171	Sarah:	Yeah, like reflective. So, so what would you understand if I said to you 'do you engage in reflective practices?'
172	Nicola:	I would just think...that you're, that it's kind of self-reflection. I don't know whether it is or not (laugh). But, I just kind of see it as something similar to self-awareness but I really don't know.
173	Sarah:	And you seem to engage in a lot of different activities and methods and spaces where you get to do that.
174	Nicola:	Yeah, but like.... I don't, I hope that I (laugh) won't be that reflective forever like I mean it just is an important thing at the moment....but I mean I hope to be...always quite self-aware, I hope progressing and reflective, but...not...to the point where that's all I do and that's all I think about, is myself, you know. That it's more of a...that it becomes more of a natural thing. Sorry there, I'm gone off the question again. That I seem to spend a lot of time, yes, I do. But that's sort of...it's probably because I'm...I know you're always learning but....I'm, I'm probably still learning a lot about it. Whereas maybe it won't have to be such a, conscious thing 'I must now do this' or something. Or maybe, as I get more...whatever...it'll just be there in the background more or it'll just be more part of me so I won't have to...you know, consciously do it. But I think everyone probably does have to consciously do it, no matter how, practiced they are in it, no matter how positive they are, you know, think they can be or whatever. (Yeah, yeah) It's, yeah, it's not like the solution, like I was saying, it's just....

175	Sarah:	A process.
176	Nicola:	A process, yeah.
177	Sarah:	So it sounds like you're aware that you do a lot of reflexive practices and, on the one hand, you kind of view it as.....that this is a learning stage. That you're doing a lot of it and you're consciously doing a lot of it and you half expect that in the future it will become more natural and won't have to be a conscious decision to be reflexive. And yet then, you were kind of saying that actually, it's probably always good to consciously (yeah) reflect.
178	Nicola:	I think what I, what it is....that you were saying that like I seem to do this a lot. So, I do, and I do think that I will continue to do this in the future. And hopefully will always, you know...
179	Sarah:	Be reflective.
180	Nicola:	Yeah. Because I think I probably always have been but maybe I'm a bit more.....it's probably just different now or it's more..... Yeah, when I say, I always have been I probably mean that I probably thought a lot, (yeah) but maybe it's more reflective now or awareness now, or whatever.... But...
181	Sarah:	You're saying there's a difference in the way you think. Like, you're saying 'I always thought a lot' but being reflective isn't necessarily....the same.
182	Nicola:	No, not necessarily. But actually I don't really know (laugh). I suppose maybe I just focused on different things. But...
183	Sarah:	And now you focus on awareness.
184	Nicola:	Yeah, yeah....more...yeah, more with the view to...progression and just being, yeah, progression....open to...growth and stuff like that. (Yeah, yeah, yeah) But yeah, I was, going to say something but I just forget what it was, about how I...said yeah that I thought at some point it would become more natural or something. But, I, I...yeah the reason that I think that I do it a lot at the moment is because...I find it valuable and sort of...I do a lot because I'm trying to keep myself in the practice and I'm sort of afraid that if I don't I will....let go of it or something or, you know. So the reason I do quite a lot of it now is so that it becomes a natural thing for me to do it. Not so much that it becomes natural that I can snap into being mindful or whatever just that it becomes....
185	Sarah:	A part of what you do.
186	Nicola:	Yeah, that I automatically...do these things or....become aware of times when I will realise 'oh, you need to look after yourself now' or 'you need to do such-a-thing' or 'you need not to be in this situation' or whatever (laugh). (Yeah, yeah)
187	Sarah:	So you believe that reflexive and reflective practices will get you to a point where you'll be able to do that for yourself?

188	Nicola:	Yeah...I, I suppose it's just, it's more that.....if I...yeah, if I keep...it's almost like to make it a habit. If you keep reflecting, that you're going to....and just like actually take time to see where you are or whatever...that it will become a habit and that....I just, I keep forgetting what you're asking me (laugh). I'm so...
189	Sarah:	You're giving me loads of information....don't worry at all. I'll bring you back to the question.
190	Nicola:	I'm glad you can remember.
191	Sarah:	So would you feel that it's beneficial...to be reflective?
193	Nicola:	Yes. And, yeah, that's, that's....what I think is....
194	Sarah:	What is it you gain like as opposed to not being reflective, like what are the differences? Why do it? What are the benefits?
195	Nicola:	Well, I think the benefit...the way I was saying that I'm probably doing it more now because I want to make it a habit because I just feel that it's something that helps you to...well for me, it just helps me to keep moving on. Or to....like, to see, to stay in the now at the same time, you know. But....yeah, just to, to, to like....be aware like of where (laugh)...where I am but to keep, to be in the now but to know what that is so that you can keep on moving really.
196	Sarah:	Yeah, and what's....if that's what you get from engaging in practices. You know, keeping yourself in the now, being able to recognise the now, knowing what it is and being able to move from that place. What is it that you have if you're not reflective...in comparison?
197	Nicola:	Not reflective....well I suppose there's like a risk of just getting stuck in a rut or whatever. And... But I would like from sort of reflecting and trying to be in the now and trying to...progress and things, would be just to, you know, become the best person I can be. And, if I was to be more....not really reflect and that, maybe, maybe I wouldn't...maybe I would just be going through the motions and not really aware of, you know, if I was thinking negative things that would maybe hold me back from....(yeah) you know, I don't really want to say achieving, but being more or something.
198	Sarah:	And you wouldn't be aware.
199	Nicola:	If I wasn't aware, yeah.
200	Sarah:	Of those negative things or for.... You could focus on something else, (yeah) as you do. And....you know the type of research I'm doing and the type of interview that I'm trying to conduct, is narrative and...you know, is part of narrative inquiry.... What would narrative mean for you? Or does it have any meaning for you?
201	Nicola:	I suppose, I just kind of, just relates to the person's own story... (Yeah) Narrative, I suppose....yeah, more than, if it's, more the other way with an interview there's very specific questions. I don't know, I see narrative as being something a little bit looser or a little bit more open. (Yeah) And...it can, while there are specifics, it can sort of,

202	Sarah:	take its own twists and turns and...yeah, just... And, and it's based on kind of storytelling and hearing somebody else's story and getting to tell your own story. Do you think stories are important?
203	Nicola:	Yeah, I do. And like...that's really, you know, what reflecting is, and reflecting on your own story. You know if you don't, you don't really see your own story, you just kind of...I don't know, I'm probably taking this to the whole other...extreme, but if you know, you just kind of like I was saying just go through the motions, get up, go to work, etc, do all the things on your list...it's, there's not much story. Well there probably is but you sort of....you're missing out or something (laugh)
204	Sarah:	You miss it.
205	Nicola:	You're missing it, yeah. (Yeah, yeah)
206	Sarah:	And just on the, sorry to just go back to the self-care and the wellbeing, would you have used or have been particularly aware of self-care and wellbeing when you were in the workplace?
207	Nicola:	No. But...the only thing I'll say about that really, well probably won't be the only thing I'll say (laugh), is....the last job that I had, it just probably shows that I'm a bit more self-caring now, that I took myself out of that position because it wasn't a good place for me, so... That's sort of a different thing. When I was in the job, if I was caring for myself....
208	Sarah:	Where did that awareness come from?
209	Nicola:	It just...would have come from...trying to look after my own self and wellbeing for the last number of years, (yeah) so... But probably...it probably, only...I probably only became a bit more self-caring...in the time between...working in that café and the one before that, where there was a year where I was doing a course. And probably a lot of....there's probably a lot of personal....progression or something. And more awareness and importance put on my self-care. So when I went back into that position...I could see, the...that it wasn't...the way I react there or interact or whatever...isn't good for my self-care. Now I don't know whether in another time, with more self-care and awareness and reflection, I could go back in there and use it so that I could actually stay in that environment. I don't know whether it would always be....something that I would just find having a negative impact on me. (Yeah) Like, I don't have any particular want to go back there, (yeah) but I do see that I am open to the fact that if I was more....wellbeing-ed (laugh) that I could maybe do that.
210	Nicola:	But I think possibly if there was other things in my life. Whereas before it was just, it felt like....that was all there was, (yeah) there wasn't much hope for anything else. So maybe if I was doing that but I had a lot of focus and I was working on something else and it was just, I could see it as a means to an end and, you know, it paid the bills while I was creating a masterpiece or something (yeah)...that maybe then I could do it and I could be there and you know be more mindful while I was there because...you know, I was only going to do this for a short while (yeah, yeah) or until a certain point or something.
211	Sarah:	So sounds like you're...taking the example of the café, that, through your own self-

		awareness, self-care, that if you were at a point where it might give, you might find enough strength from within to be able to sustain the negatives in there. And it also sounded like, nearly, you'd be half willing to consider that if there was something else outside, like your true occupation. (Yeah, yeah) That this would be a job and your occupation or what you did, was something else.
212	Nicola:	Yeah.... Yeah and I... Like how I would see working in the cafes...as not particular....not a particularly, not a particularly good experience. But, because....because of probably where I was at at that time...but even though the last time I worked in a café was bad, in some ways maybe in wasn't as bad as before. But...it was still negative for me because I still had that feeling that there was....'Am I going to be here forever' that I still...I wasn't doing my....I don't know my 'true calling in life' or whatever (laugh) (Yeah, yeah) And so, I think....you know I wasn't going to be....hugely happy there, but.... Yeah, so like you said, if...I could do it if there was something else, if....if it was only, you know, a means to an end really. (Yeah, yeah)
213	Sarah:	And you use the words 'true calling'. Does job or occupation...have relevance to one's self-care and wellbeing?
214	Nicola:	Yeah. I think so.
215	Sarah:	And what kind of relevance do you think it can have?
216	Nicola:	Well it probably, it probably depends on the person. Like....and their own views on things, because some people just see work as work and then they....they can go in and they can do their job but they have interests outside and that seems to be enough to sustain them and that's the way it is. But, I don't know, for other people....and there's probably a whole lot of variations in between (yeah) but...for other people maybe, maybe it <i>is</i> their...work that kind of... Because work is such a big part of what you do, like. It's, it's.... Well if your job is like almost like what your, where your gifts lie...(yeah)
217	Nicola:	But some people might, you know, like, for example, say my father would have worked in an office job for his whole life and he would have spent time doing music and spent time playing football or involved with football and, you know, like I said that was enough to sustain him or whatever...he had the balance there. It depends on your priorities, I suppose his priority was probably that his family was looked after. So, he just went and worked and it was...you know, in some ways he probably liked that, but...it's not majorly...oh, I don't know, I'm probably just complicating things again.
218	Nicola:	But I think I'm just trying to say that...people have different priorities and some people just can see work in a different way, it can be just the money or whatever but maybe other people want to, you know, use what gifts they have (yeah) in a workplace. Whereas some people that, see work as....to occupy the day or to pay the bills or whatever...and maybe they use their...you know, gifts in other ways. (Yeah, yeah) Outside of work they, you know, they...I don't know, care for their children or their families or they....I don't know, look after the garden, do favours for people, you know, whatever.
219	Sarah:	Somewhere else where they get fulfilment.

220	Nicola:	Yeah. That's an easier way to say it (laugh).
221	Sarah:	And you used the phrase 'true calling'. In <i>this</i> moment, can you identify, right now, what you feel your true calling is?
222	Nicola:	No, (laugh) absolutely, no.
223	Sarah:	No. (Yeah) So right now, it's not even that you could get a job that would reflect your true calling when you haven't identified that for yourself yet.
224	Nicola:	Yeah, I don't think so. Yeah, like I have yet to see a job advertised and go 'wow...I would love that', you know. (Yeah) But sometimes I see something and I go 'yeah, I think that I would quite like to do that now'. (Yeah) But, it's, it's just more so for...to have a job, you know...to have like a wage and to have a routine almost, to...the day, and to have, sort of....yeah, some sort of a....some sort of...even to just have value on yourself in a way. (Yeah) So there are, there are good things about jobs that you don't always want. You know it mightn't be your...there are good things about working that aren't...even if it's not something you think is what you were born to do (laugh) or whatever, like... It can still give you a sense of value or worth or whatever. (Yeah, yeah, yeah)
225	Sarah:	So, kind of in the past and even at the present, 'job' for you, kind of represents something quite functional, you know, you go, you get a wage, you get a routine, you have value within the working society. (Yeah) And yet you sound like somebody who is looking...exploring in other avenues, just other parts of yourself and that, and you use the word true calling so I assume you believe that there is a true calling but don't necessarily know what that is yet.
226	Nicola:	Yeah, yeah. But I don't even like the term 'true calling', I don't know where I got it from. Well it's okay I suppose (laugh). I only just said it I never really...(It's not really your word) But....I'm sorry, I'm just forgetting everything here, my brain is not working.
227	Sarah:	It's just a summarization so it's okay you don't have to reply.
228	Nicola:	Yeah it's...yeah I think there, possibly there is something, that I can be more fulfilled and more...happy with and more, seems more like a place where I...like to be or a more natural thing for me, rather than....a job or a workplace where....that is the case for a lot of people where they're like 'oh I have to go to work'. And of course you probably feel like that no matter what you do, a bit, on some days. But...just some...there has to be something that.....that just feels right and feels good.
229	Sarah:	And has some meaning.
230	Nicola:	And has some meaning and would, sort of helps like I said, just on the quest to be the best you can be. (Yeah, yeah, perfect)
231	Sarah:	And how...so we were talking about narrative at some point (laugh). And this I suppose is an example of me attempting the kind of, the narrative interview. And how have you found this space or this type of interview?

232	Nicola:	Oh...good, yeah. Very good, because.... Interesting, because I didn't really...know what I would say or how it would go and it just kind of, it wrote its own story. Also good because...as my mind was finding it very difficult to focus and stuff, it was very good that you had the....focus or the capacity to kind of bring, bring it back to where we were or, you know, you just...yeah, get something more out of it probably. Because to answer your own questions but that also helps me to....see what points I had or what points I was making or to just to kind of explore something a bit more. So yeah it was very good.
233	Sarah:	And were there any parts that were uncomfortable or that you didn't particularly like?
234	Nicola:	No, not really. And it was also probably good that it was more narrative and open because it's not like you have to answer exact things, you know, in that way? (Yeah) So....yeah, it was an interesting experience. I just hope I'm just not sounding like the most obsessed with myself person on the planet, but...
235	Sarah:	Well, I set the, the topics on very (laugh) self, not obsessed, but self-focused things so....you could only work within the remit.
236	Nicola:	I suppose, yeah.
237	Sarah:	And was there anything that you feel I haven't asked that would be important in this conversation? Only if something comes to mind, if something stands out as...as seeming important.
238	Nicola:	I'm not sure did you ask, you didn't ask it directly but you did ask it in another way....just to sort of how would I have come to mindfulness in the first place, and you did ask it because, in sort of saying...in a self-care way, you said something about that, because I remember saying that I was more forced into self-care myself. So you probably did ask it, I'm just not really....as a, as a practice, you probably did ask that but...
239	Sarah:	But it would have been nice or interesting for you to be asked 'how did you come to mindfulness?'
240	Nicola:	Maybe.
241	Sarah:	And would your answer be different? Do you feel there was something that you didn't get to say?
242	Nicola:	No, really I don't think there's anything else I could possibly say (laugh). Oh my God, no...it's just, because I'm not coming from actual mindfulness, you probably, you maybe would have asked it to someone else. It's just what came, what I just thought of now.
243	Sarah:	Thank you.
244	Nicola:	I can't really think of anything else.

245	Sarah:	Is there anything else in general you'd like to say.
246	Nicola:	No, maybe just...it's different because like I said I don't know about mindfulness, but maybe....for you to explain something about it or...briefly....or even about, you know, you asked me about the reflective practice and maybe it's, you know, maybe that's not important because it's your interview, it's for you to find out information and you don't need to tell the person 'this is what we think of..' when, you know, after you ask me what do you think mindfulness is. Say perhaps 'well this is kind of what it's normally seen as, what do you think of that?'. Not 'you're wrong' or anything but just 'could you see it that way?' or.... (yeah) I suppose just maybe another way of asking them 'what do you think of it'.
247	Sarah:	And it gives me a bit more information to focus what they then talk about (yeah, that's kind of...) if you help to define it.
248	Nicola:	Yeah. But you are right to ask the other person's...definition.
249	Sarah:	First? Maybe introduce your own as well.
250	Nicola:	But I probably brought you off on a track anyway so you didn't have a chance.
251	Sarah:	But for somebody who say, hasn't engaged with what would be called, have the name put on it 'mindfulness', it could have been quite helpful to be told what mindfulness meant and then you'd know whether you had engaged in it or not.
252	Nicola:	Or reflective practicing, or, or even journaling because I don't, I just see, I just write a few things down, I don't really know if this is...but I think it's probably a personal thing anyway, whatever way you do it. (Yeah) It just depends on the person. (Yeah) But anyway, who knows.
253	Sarah:	That's great. Thanks a million. I'll take that on. So thank you very much.
254	Nicola:	You're welcome.
255	Sarah:	And fair play to you.

TRANSCRIPT 2: INTERVIEW WITH GERRY, 12.3.11

1	Sarah:	Right so. So just for the...for the tape. You read through the consent form and you haven't signed it yet but you're happy enough with it, at present?
2	Gerry:	Yes.
3	Sarah:	Grand. And...and anything that comes up during the interview, if you don't want to answer that's not a problem. And is it okay if I just have a pen and paper here in case (that's fine) something comes up for me? Great. So I suppose just to begin maybe to introduce ourselves and to identify our own relationship.
4	Sarah:	So, you know, Sarah Bates, the researcher, and...I'm interviewing my father, Gerry Bates, who I have asked to interview because...I know that you're experienced in mindfulness and that you've always kept a journal. And I suppose, more than that, when I started to explore this I was very surprised to find that you had already been down that path and I just hadn't noticed (laugh)...that you were using mindfulness and journaling. So I suppose that's the reason why I asked you to be here for this. Yeah. Is there anything you want to say about your position here or....
5	Gerry:	Just, I'm delighted to be working with my daughter on this project.
6	Sarah:	Yeah and I'd be feeling...quite comfortable about the interview.... And I'm interested to see whether the dad/daughter thing (yeah) kicks in or whether I'll be able to maintain researcher stance....(laugh). So...how do you feel, do you've any...
7	Gerry:	I am kind of looking forward to this because I'm always interested in exploring, I suppose, my own life and consciousness and it just adds an extra bit.....strong bit of interest that I'm doing it with my daughter.
8	Sarah:	Grand. So maybe to start...we might talk about mindfulness and mindful practices. To begin with, what's your understanding of those words?
9	Gerry:	Oh, I suppose... I, from the time I was, I suppose, teens, I was 12, 13, 14, I would have always been a thinker....and, and a worrier. And so I would have <i>always</i> thought about what I was doing, about life and about anything I was involved in and particularly about my own self and my...my fears, my life, my possibilities, my sense of what I wanted to do with my life.
10	Gerry:	I have always been...I suppose, strongly religious. And I've always, certainly as a child, as a young person growing up, I wanted to do what I felt...was right for me, with God. So being prayerful and thoughtful, I suppose, were very close together. (Yeah)
11	Gerry:	The mindfulness sense in terms of what I would see as the modern understanding of mindfulness, the word I suppose only came later, but my sense is that...in the Christian tradition that I have grown up in, the notion of contemplation, of, kind of silent prayer, of putting your thoughts and your plans before, in the presence of God, to me it all links with mindfulness.
12	Sarah:	And is mindfulness a word that encompasses what you think of, or would there be a word that you would prefer to use than mindfulness?

13	Gerry:	I suppose mindfulness to me is very much a word in my mind for the last few years because it has become a kind of a common sort of a practice. I would be, I suppose, more at home with what I would call awareness. (Yeah) Yeah, I think that's the word I would use, to myself kind of.
14	Sarah:	And would you engage with specific practices then....around awareness?
15	Gerry:	Well again, yes I would. And I'd say at the moment, the kind of things....I would generally... begin each morning with...what I would call...I suppose basically prayer, but it's very mindful kind of prayer. And, and I see no huge...difference between it and what I would call, what most people would regard as mindful practice. For example, I would, often as part of my morning routine kind of, and I like to get up early in the morning kind of on my own. I would pray and I would often do something which would be like a body scan.
16	Gerry:	And I would often go for a walk and for instance this morning, as I would often do, I would go down to park, I would go down beside the river and I would become of my own breathing beside the river. And I would be aware of my feet as they go on the leaves on the little path down to the river. And I'm aware of light in the sky, aware of the sun coming up a bit.
17	Gerry:	So, I suppose, really at this stage of my life....awareness is something that I think is just part of me and, and I very much...chose that, want that. And....and I suppose <i>one</i> of the reasons why I retired from my teaching job, about a year ago, was I wanted to give more time. I wanted more time for myself, and for my reflections. And one of the joys I have now is being able to take that time in the morning. And...I suppose I find it enriching.
18	Sarah:	And, and you say...that you were always the type of child who was quite thoughtful and quite connected to religion and God and prayer. So, is it something that was always there or was it something that at some point you consciously sought to be more aware or to engage in practices that would increase your awareness?
19	Gerry:	I think, I came from quite a religious family, and I would have soaked up that religion as a child. And I would have seen it as part of my life to seek out God and to seek out my way to God. And part of that would have been the Christian practices of prayer and sacraments, all of which I would think feed into....I suppose a certain kind of awareness. As I grew older, I suppose I developed and became...I suppose more broader. And...now I would see myself very much linking in with <i>all</i> kinds of traditions of prayer, mindfulness, contemplation, meditation and...at the moment, I would get a lot from looking at some of the Buddhist practices which I feel fit in perfectly with...my own kind of Christian sense.
20	Sarah:	So is it a religious thing for you?
21	Gerry:	Well to me life is religion, like religion is life, life is religion. I don't make...like I don't...I am a spiritual person I suppose, that, but that's how I see life. (Yeah) I don't really see a huge distinction between, I suppose, my, if you like, my philosophy of life, my way of living. They tie in and they integrate at this stage of my life.
22	Sarah:	So in your personal life, you're obviously...quite consciously made <i>time</i> even recently

		to be able to allow yourself to just be and to be present and to be aware. So, as an individual, what is it that it gives you?
23	Gerry:	I suppose it just...makes me appreciate what life is all about. I mean one of the remarkable things I believe, and I firmly believe, I think, at its heart and its best, life is very simple. So you breathe, you sleep, you walk, you talk, you love. It's to me...I suppose my philosophy of life is that life is gift.
24	Gerry:	And...and you don't have to...grasp it or you don't have to, as I would have, gone after it in ways, kind of urgently with various methods and so on, now I see...I suppose to some extent, my....practice of spirituality, of awareness, has allowed me to see that actually a lot of life is to do is letting be, but I think it's being aware of letting be as well.
25	Gerry:	And there's a lot of...maybe stuff you have to go through, before you can reach the simplicity, although I think there are people who have this gift very early on in life and I think maybe, I suspect that some, in some, in primitive peoples tend to have this, I think we have...overlay life with an awful lot of stuff that really....I believe, at this stage, is not essential for true living.
26	Sarah:	And then in your professional life, these kind of level of awareness and practices around awareness, would you bring them into your professional life?
27	Gerry:	Oh, I suppose the more I....I suppose the more I matured, the more I began to see that I....I was a teacher and I taught particularly religion. And I wanted to be genuine, I wanted to be truthful. So, in a sense, I aimed at teaching what I lived. And I got great joy out of challenging students with...what I would call the basis of true living, which I now believe, and did believe for some time, is quite simple.
28	Gerry:	And challenging, kind of, the stuff that a lot of young people like to have now and often making fun of them...and seeing that to get true happiness in life...you have to get, go beyond all those things. And things like genuine friendship, just genuine appreciation of yourself, of your breathing, of being able to walk and look and stuff and sport and fun and music, all things which, I believe, connect naturally with people.
29	Gerry:	So I suppose, if you, yeah, of course, I connect it with my professional life. And I think the more, I think, looking back, the more skilful I got....and the more...I suppose, maybe peaceful I got, the more I was <i>able</i> to bring, kind of, the stuff of awareness <i>into</i> my actual teaching life.
30	Gerry:	I'm also very struck by, in a sense, the, the negative side of life, in terms of...I know one of the things that's mentioned in, in one of your paragraphs that, that I read, or one of the things you would like to look at is the connection between, kind of physical illness, and not looking after yourself and I would be...I would have suffered quite a bit in my...teenage years, in, in...through much of my life, from over-anxiousness, which would at times express itself as what I now see as forms of depression. Often at the time I wouldn't have been fully aware of that.
31	Gerry:	And I would link it all very much with...I suppose hurt that had happened to me, I think starting back particularly from my father's death, but <i>probably</i> going back much

		<p>further than that as well....so that, kind of certainly from the time my father died when I was 12 years of age....I would have had recurring patterns of an awful lot of anxiety, And, as I got older, patterns of feeling quite down at times. And I suppose that, in some ways, that was negative, in other ways I think it deepened me as well. And, part of it would have led me to....to kind of practices of relaxation, when I'd feel I'm anxious or down and sometimes they helped and sometimes they didn't. (Yeah) So...I'm not sure where I'm going with that, in terms of, I suppose just I do want to acknowledge....that for a lot of my life there was a lot of <i>struggle</i> going on. And, in that struggle...I think sometimes, I sort of, steeled myself to just getting through and just doing what I had to do, I'd say too much.</p>
32	Gerry:	<p>Whereas,and...I suppose, one of the key....things that happened there, was maybe I often get mixed up with the years, but I'd say maybe 10, 12 years ago, I was...going through a very low time, that, normally when I'd have these patterns of low times, once enough time passed...the depression or whatever would lift and I would carry on. But this particular time it wasn't lifting. And it got to a stage where, I remember talking to one of my colleagues in school and saying that I felt I'd have to stop teaching like I'd have to get for a year or something because it really...I was getting no joy from it. I was extremely anxious all the time. And even though I seemed able to carry on so that other people didn't notice <i>that</i> much, although I do know that my teaching was suffering and I was fighting more with my classes and they weren't as receptive as they would normally be and there was much more conflict than there would normally be.</p>
33	Gerry:	<p>And, in the end, I decided to do 2 things. And particularly with encouragement from Sheila my wife, because I felt, I felt so bad I didn't really feel like doing something even though I knew I should be doing something. But she encouraged me to go to my doctor and....and it was an interesting part of that where, I didn't expect...that he would be particularly, I suppose, sympathetic because I didn't see him....he was a very practical kind of doctor, a very good doctor, but I wouldn't have...he's not a person I would have gone to to talk to about something. But anyway I went to him, and funny something...there was one particular note he struck and would have, he said it to me, he said 'you will get well'. And he put me on some kind of anti-depressants and I was reluctant enough but I felt I needed to do something, I had to do something...so I was prepared to try this. But I remember this thing of 'you will get well' meant a lot to me. And, and he actually listened to me a lot. I'm not sure whether he understood me, but he listened to whatever I wanted to say to him and I'm forever, be forever grateful to him for that.</p>
34	Gerry:	<p>And at the same time I went to Aware meetings. And, rather remarkably, within 2 or 3 weeks....I felt things moving for me. It might have been more than that because I know it took maybe, it took some time for the, for the tablets to kind of kick in. But once they did, I remember vividly, that the awful morning feeling that I used have, was kind of numbed and that, that was a plus for me. And, and once I started going to the Aware meetings, I...suddenly realised 'God, I think I'm going to get out of this.' And I got huge, sort of, after maybe the first 2 weeks of these weekly Aware meetings, I'd say by the third week, I got a sense of support and a sense of kind of understanding of depression, I think, <i>from</i> the group that seemed to lift me hugely. And, while it took me, I say, the best part of a year, to kind of get back to a sense of real peace within myself and a feeling that...without the fear of 'oh God, I might be down again next week or down again in 2 weeks time'....</p>

35	Gerry:	But...it also tied in with, I continued with my own....I suppose I would have a very deep attachment to...going to Mass and experiencing what I believe to be the presence of Jesus in the Mass. That was there all the time as well, even though when I would feel low I wouldn't feel any of that.
36	Gerry:	So the whole lot just seemed to come together and....and really, I feel that was...a huge advance, in my own self. And...while, for some time after that I would, every so often I'd wonder 'oh God, I wonder when I'm going to get my depression time again'...it hasn't actually happened and, I do feel, through all of that....that...I think I have a stronger hold on...myself and my own peace. And I think even if I <i>did</i> get very anxious again....I think I have ways of dealing with it now, that...I wouldn't be as fearful of it. And I think I would be hopeful that sooner or later I would...reach peace again.
37	Sarah:	And that depression, the anxiousness....I'm trying to think of a better word, but like, were they real in the sense that, by giving them awareness and allowing them to be heard or to be felt, you said that you often kind of pushed through and that eventually what seemed to change it was nearly sitting in it. Like is that real awareness by allowing yourself to <i>be</i> those things as well as nice stuff?
38	Gerry:	I suppose it is. I think part of my way of living and believing and..... I would have always had a fear, I suppose, of...maybe, losing the sense of, that life is good. And I think that this would tie in very much with the fear of losing my belief in God, and all that that would mean to me. And, I think it's, certainly in some ways, I had to allow myself to face the fears and to live with the possibility of unbelief, to nearly reach a sense of 'well belief is a fragile thing anyway'. And...to be a believer, has a fragility in it, which is part of it. And now I would feel I have a lot of peace with that. (Yeah) Whereas, for many years of my life, I was kind of, I suppose, fearful of that.
39	Sarah:	And by removing the fear, do you think that has a relationship with not re-experiencing depression?
40	Gerry:	I...imagine it has. Although I'd always, too I suppose, one of the words I, I kind of like to use, or like to think of myself. I think life is mysterious. And life is paradoxical. So, while I think there are ways you can approach things and there are better ways and let's say, less effective ways, I think there's a mystery about life too, so that you can't....I think you can't protect yourself from sometimes the illogicality, (yeah) or the paradox nature of life. (Yeah) So that you literally <i>don't</i> know what tomorrow will bring.
41	Sarah:	And that sort of wisdom, you know, when you talked about kind of bringing that into the classroom and trying to... <i>show</i> teenagers, did you experience that it could be taught?
42	Gerry:	I have no doubt that....one of the, again, teaching for me, there're many, many aspects to it. But one part of this is...being present to people, the teacher being present to the class. And allowing a class to become aware of stuff and I think that there's a lot can happen there. For example, in the last few years of my teaching, a lot...many times I would have used a simple breathing exercise. And, to some extent, I used make fun like I would ask a class of teenagers, often older ones or younger ones, like 'what's the most important thing you do every day?' And they would

43	Gerry:	<p>mention various things and they got used to me asking this question of course, eventually they'd say 'breathing'.</p> <p>And I'd say 'yes, now we're just going to breathe, that's all we're going to do.' And I would do this very simple exercise for a minute of standing up and letting them become aware of their own breathing and trying to breathe...deeply, (yeah) maybe 2 or 3 times. And...but I would build into that or around that, the notion of it is good for people to be aware of themselves and recognise both the good aspects and the bad aspects. And certainly young people...can...they can get an awareness there, depending on their own situations and how free they are of their own particular time, that particular day or whatever. I think they <i>can</i> certainly catch into it.</p>
44	Gerry:	<p>And, many of my classes would have enjoyed some quite simple meditation exercises, but where I would be allowing people to body scan...other times I would add into it just being grateful for life, for their bodies. And I've no doubt that most of them <i>can</i> do that sometimes, (yeah) sometimes they can't. But when you also build around that, the intellectual capacity of looking at their own gifts or having an awareness of their own gifts, or having an awareness of what brings joy into their lives and how simple things like getting involved in a heavy sports game, like dancing, like singing, to reflect on the joy that that brings into their lives and to kind of, to try and become aware of that and to <i>use</i> that, as a positive force in their lives. I, I'm sure they can grasp some of that.</p>
45	Gerry:	<p>And then I would sometimes talk to them about the negative side, depression, suicide....and, try and get them to see that really the best way of dealing with things like depression and suicide and so on, is to find their own...positive things and to try and focus, certainly at times, on those. (Yeah) And a value of...having support and having friendship....and to me that was a big part of my teaching.</p>
46	Sarah:	<p>And could you see it...benefitting? Could you see changes or how...?</p>
47	Gerry:	<p>I would think...over a period of a year. I often have this notion of, when I'd meet a class as a first year class, I begin a story with them, the story of me and them and what happens. And their, the various stories of school life. So sometimes you would have a class, and every time they come in to you they wonder 'so what are we going to do today Sir?' or 'where will we go with this today?' And it builds up and obviously a very strong relationship. And you can see people developing and growing. And then you mightn't see somebody for a few years and then you get them back maybe in sixth year, and you can see that they're still expecting you to come out with some of this stuff. And....and then much later on in life, you meet people and you know that they have picked up some of this stuff. (Yeah) So that's all and, and I think one...lovely thing, just as we were talking here....like my relationship with my <i>own</i> family, with my children as they grew up....and...I like to be able to talk at this level and to realise yeah they do understand where you're coming from, and they actually... have found a way into this place themselves in <i>their</i> own way. And there's something marvellous about that.</p>
48	Sarah:	<p>So just while you brought it up...and it was lovely the way you said when you meet a first year class, you see that as the beginning of your story, of <i>a</i> story....the them and you story. And stories, I mean, you would have read that this is a narrative interview so it's about capturing somebody's experience and story. Is story important to you?</p>

49	Gerry:	Well there's a lovely phrase that....the Jews have...'God made man because he loves to tell stories'. And there is a theology of story, which would be very...close to <i>again</i> what I would regard as my way...of living life. And I would use a lot of stories in my teaching and I love listening to people and I love listening to people's stories.
50	Gerry:	And, you asked about....we talked a little while ago about how young people can develop an awareness. And to me, one of the most powerful way is getting a young person to tell someone their story. And I was only thinking very recently, because I was doing some work on it, that...there are particular things...or, or topics I suppose, which I've used...throughout my teaching life. And one of the most powerful ones is...I will ask a class how many of them know somebody who is intellectually disabled. And nearly always in a class you'll find somebody who has a family member who is intellectually disabled. And I will gently ask them...if it's okay for them and they feel it would be okay for the family if they told some of the story of that person. And generally they do. And it has a very deep impact on the whole class. And, such kind of stories...and then other people will have stories of people they know. And I will sometimes tell the story of how I would have felt very uncomfortable with people like that. And how I kind of dealt with that through my own wife who has a great gift and works with people with intellectual disability.
51	Gerry:	And I would develop that into...there's a particular man who would be...I suppose, a great inspiration to me, who is now, he must be in his 80s or 90s, but he caused a revolution in looking after people who used to be called mentally handicapped...by giving his life to living with these people and...inspiring a lot of young people to come and live with the people with him. And they developed a whole philosophy of...seeing people with intellectual disability as actually people who were very gifted and we just have to find their gifts and allow them ways of expressing them. And...I found that a great way of allowing teenagers to also express their own fragilities.
52	Gerry:	Because I suppose we're all disabled in ways. (Yeah) And once you accept a disability in somebody else, you accept your own. So there's a very...and it's very loving and it's very warm and it's very people-building I think, and, and allows people time too to acknowledge the hurts in their own families and that that <i>too</i> is part of life. And...to me, for young people, often for troubled young people...I think that's, that's a way into some kind of healing, to see that you can be hurt in your own family and yet, there can be a way of living with that and somehow finding a way out of that, and maybe even building that into a positive for yourself, which obviously is very difficult, it doesn't happen in the classroom, but I think the...frameworks for such possibilities can be reached in the classroom sometimes.
53	Sarah:	Through stories.
54	Gerry:	Particularly through stories. Through real stories.
55	Sarah:	Yeah. So moving away then a bit from that.... Journaling. What would your understanding be of journaling?
56	Gerry:	Well I suppose, everything I've talked about....I have journalled. From very early on....probably, I don't know how far back it goes, but certainly, I remember...when I left secondary school....I would have written down things, <i>possibly</i> , because I went, at, after secondary school, I went to seminary. And there may well have been

		something in that that...it might have been common practice even for people to write down their thoughts or their reflections. But I know, from that time, I would have regularly written down stuff about what was going on, my own reflections on things, my reflections on my kind of, prayer life, my concerns, my anxieties. So, and I'm sure that gave me...some kind of a...I used to enjoy doing it.
57	Gerry:	Sometimes it was painful because you'd be writing about painful stuff and funny, I've often found, if I was very down, I would do very little journaling. But as I would come out of the down times, I would be journaling again. And sometimes once I started journaling again, it would nearly be a sign that I was coming out of the down times.
58	Sarah:	And have you ever figured out <i>why</i> that was?
59	Gerry:	I...hadn't really thought too much...but I think it might be simple enough that...if you're feeling very down, you are not inclined to express yourself very much, you close in on yourself. So you often don't particularly want to be meeting people or talking to people, and also you don't want to be writing, expressing yourself. I think it's possibly acceptance
60	Sarah:	And at those times would you still have been engaging in awareness practices or would that have been kind of cut down as well?
61	Gerry:	I would say, I would have.....I would have probably always tried but they wouldn't have come as easy. And possibly, I would have cut down on them...in low times.
62	Sarah:	And what would have been the motivation, to do them when you did do them when you were low?
63	Gerry:	Oh, I'd say from my religious tradition, the notion of discipline and daily habits of stuff...would have been very strong. And also living in the seminary community, they were practices like, you, you had your meditation and prayer times. (Yeah) And I would have always been a sort of good student, so I by-and-large did what I was (told) supposed to do.
64	Sarah:	And would there have been any hope in them?
65	Gerry:	Again, in the down times, often not very much. But as I would come out of the down times, yes. I mean it's very hard to know maybe which came first like.
66	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. So sorry, so the journaling would have started particularly as a discipline then, at the time of the seminary?
67	Gerry:	Yeah but it was, I'm not even sure about that. I know like, I always enjoyed it. (Yeah, yeah) And...I liked to record things that were important, things that I enjoyed. And I also, through my writing, reflected on my anxieties and my problems and difficulties. But I, I would have particularly enjoyed recording things achievements and things I really enjoyed and people I would particularly enjoy and so on.
68	Sarah:	And have you carried that through?
69	Gerry:	More or less, yeah.

70	Sarah:	'Cause you used the phrase that you 'used to enjoy'.
71	Gerry:	No, what I mean by that is...I would still enjoy that, (yeah, yeah) yeah.
72	Sarah:	So that, that would have been personal stuff, would it?
73	Gerry:	A lot of it would be, yeah, yeah.
74	Sarah:	And would you have ever used journaling in, in work situations or...?
75	Gerry:	Well I would have sometimes, transposed like I would have written about, I would introduce that. Stuff, I would feel 'that's good now, I'll bring that in to my class tomorrow' or 'I'll use that in my class tomorrow.' (Yeah) And sometimes I would write stuff...which would come out of my journaling, it'd be slightly different as I used it for writing something but...(yeah) So the, like again, I suppose, I'd see my life very much as a...I mean I'm a very focused kind of person really, I think. So that, whatever I do tends to come in to whatever else I do. (yeah, yeah, yeah)
76	Sarah:	So the journaling has actually let to, to...kind of...writings that were being put out, into either workplaces or into the public?
77	Gerry:	Yes, yeah.
78	Sarah:	And would you find a creative process then?
79	Gerry:	It's funny when you say creative....I mean it's <i>part</i> of me...(yeah)...so I think yes it is creative. And it is true that....I suppose it's so much part of me I don't really see it as creative, (yeah) but I think it is creative yeah.
80	Sarah:	And what would you see as the benefits of journaling?
81	Gerry:	Oh, I think, for, for....for reflection, for coming to terms with <i>all</i> kinds of things, both good and bad. I suppose working out stuff..... And very much part of my...I suppose....reflective teaching life and that's...is my life like, (yeah) there is no other life kind of. Even though I don't....practice fully as a teacher now, I would still do a lot of what I would call teaching work with people (yeah)...both on an informal and formal basis. So, and my journaling feeds into that. (Yeah)
82	Sarah:	And would you ever have the experience of, through writing, new awareness's about yourself?
83	Gerry:	I'd say maybe a deepening awareness, rather than new awareness. (Yeah) Although it is true I think that when you put things in writing, new ideas will come up. But I think in some ways, as I go on in life.....and as I give myself the opportunity to be aware, the difference between my day to day awareness and my writing may not be that much, (yeah) although writing is kind of a different way of expressing or a more...concrete way in some sense
84	Sarah:	You know, you've spoken about, as you've gotten older, as you've matured was the word you used, this awareness has grown and the practices and all have become less practices and more part of you. Do you think that the awareness could have

		happened without the engagement with awareness practices or journaling?
85	Gerry:	I suppose.....some awareness would have happened but I think they do merge in together and, I think as, as human beings....if we want to go at something we have to give time and find methods to pursue it and I think...so that if you are interested in pursuing reflection of life, I think it's nearly automatic that you find some methods that you develop.
86	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. And you found yours, ones that suit you. I use the words self-care and wellbeing and that wouldn't be everybody's words for that kind of caring or...what, what words would you use or what's your understanding of self-care and wellbeing?
87	Gerry:	I think they're good words. I suppose the phrase that caught me was 'looking after yourself'. Nurturing yourself. And I would be very committed to those...ideas <i>now</i> . I think I would have always been maybe committed to them in my head, but without...a deep appreciation of...in practice what that meant.
88	Gerry:	And I think, part of....part of my understanding at this stage is that, and this may be true of many people of, certainly a number of people of my generation, certainly of my family maybe, that, were very much head people. And feelings...were not as developed, I would suspect, from my own family background. So that I had a lot of learning to do about emotional wellbeing particularly, which I was fairly clueless in...and, I think, in the process of maturing as a human being, I think looking after my emotional side...was something I had to struggle a lot with.
89	Gerry:	I got a lot of help from the people who love me. I mean now I'd be much more at home with feelings, much more appreciative of how important it is to give time to your feelings and to allow them to be a big part of your life, which they are, rather than trying to decide in your head what is the best thing to do and pursue that with 100% vigour. (Yeah, yeah)
90	Sarah:	It sounds like you always knew...that self-care was important. But you kind of tackled it from an intellectual stance (that's very true, yeah) earlier on and then that moved over to an appreciation of emotional care as well.
91	Gerry:	Yeah and I think there was people in my life particularly. I also think there was a....in the tradition of the seminary that I went in to....there would have been a big emphasis on, kind of intellectual discipline and prayer disciplines, which I think <i>did</i> ...were damaging to the emotional side of our lives I would feel.
92	Sarah:	And you know the way people would describe kind of the 4 domains. You'd have the, the physical, the emotional, the spiritual and....the physical, the emotional, the spiritual and the intellectual (laugh). Forgetting the intellectual. The, you know, the prayer and all that, they were intellectual disciplines, but were they feeding the spirituality, was there spiritual self-care there?
93	Gerry:	I don't think....I think they were attempts...but I think the tradition we were in was, the emotional side I think was blocked. And I think the, particularly in Maynooth there was an emphasis on kind of...the intellectual side of life and there was also an emphasis on....kind of developing yourself as an individual independently, so that you didn't maybe...the sense of community wasn't great....so there wasn't a great sense

		of....people looking after one another, <i>particularly</i> in an emotional sense. So that I think a lot of us experienced a lot of getting messed up in emotions like anxiety (yeah) and other kind of negative emotions I suppose.
94	Sarah:	And where did spirituality fit into that then, or did it just not, until the emotional side came in?
95	Gerry:	Well spirituality was there. But spirituality was very much...the practice of going to Mass every morning, of having the prayer time...
96	Sarah:	So it was the doing rather than the connection?
97	Gerry:	I think so, yeah. And I think that was a problem that we didn't tend to connect things. And the...what we were taught to do tended to be the practices. Now, in fairness, there were some people in the seminary who <i>would</i> have....tried to look at kind of integrational stuff but I think by and large a lot of us missed that out. Or certainly the early years as I went on, I probably got....some insights into that, in the later years in the seminary.
98	Sarah:	So it's something that has developed in your own life. And you seem to have...somehow managed to surround yourself with people who love you, who promoted your emotional wellbeing. (Yeah) And did <i>that</i> have a part to play in work? Like, did your increased awareness of different types of wellbeing and self-care, did that impact on your work?
99	Gerry:	Yeah. Can we have a break for a minute?
100	Sarah:	Yeah. -----
101	Sarah:	So, where we were Gerry was, I was just asking you had your, kind of, increased awareness of different types of self-care and, in particular, your ability to appreciate and become aware on an emotional level, did that impact on your work?
102	Gerry:	Of course it did..... I would have become very aware.... I suppose over many years now, that...how much a part feelings played, in dealing with young people, both as a religion teacher and, for most of my life, in school as a Year Head as well. I would have been...increasingly aware I suppose, of how students felt about things. And, so my own...I suppose developing awareness of my own feelings and how they worked...certainly impacted on how I was able to listen to students as they talked about <i>their</i> feelings and particularly hurt feelings to do with...maybe being dealt with by a teacher in ways that they didn't like, maybe hurt feelings from the way they'd been dealt with by their parents or so on. And I began to see how...how just central it was.
103	Gerry:	And often, you could...certainly as a Year Head I found I could dissolve tensions once I really got in touch with the way a student was feeling and to some extent the way a teacher was feeling. And I suppose one of the frustrations of my work particularly as a Year Head, was at times, I could be very much in touch with the way the students were feeling, could also have a sense of the way that the teacher was feeling, but the

		teacher wouldn't be able, sometimes, to appreciate how their particular students felt about particular incidence and we weren't able to resolve things sometimes because of that. (Yeah) But I would have felt that that was a key.
104	Gerry:	And I suppose, as I grew in awareness of that <i>kind</i> of situation, I did begin to see very much that.....as a teacher I needed to look after myself. And I also began to see how...there is an intensity in teaching that I don't think is in many other jobs. And I think because of that, teachers really need...to be practiced in self-care.....and a lot of us aren't.
105	Sarah:	And what do you think the outcome of that is, if people don't and they're teachers?
106	Gerry:	Well you can see the outcome in the tension in the classroom. I would imagine increased ill-health among some teachers...and then the opposite of it is teachers that do....get involved in skills to do with their own health and self-care, they would become more efficient and more helpful as teachers and much more helpful to their students.
107	Sarah:	And what...when you say skills in, in self-care, give me examples of what it is, that somebody could do.
108	Gerry:	Well I think, I would have myself...did a course for a week, particularly for teachers, on mindfulness and silence in the classroom. And I would have found it <i>hugely</i> helpful and....the teachers that were there with me doing the course found it very helpful. And, I would have talked about this....back with my own teachers, kind of, and a number of them would have done something in that area as well. And quite a number of teachers now would be into...yoga. I think one of the things which struck me at one stage, which I think made a considerable difference. There was an Adult Education course, in Colour Yourself Beautiful, which quite a few of the women took on at a certain stage. And I noticed that <i>that</i> seemed to help <i>them</i> . (Yeah)
109	Gerry:	And...so that I feel any...courses that touch on self-care, now I would be particularly....impressed myself I suppose, with the whole mindfulness area. But I think, any sort of...self-care, physical or emotional, I think is beneficial (yeah) for somebody who's teaching, somebody who's in that close intense contact with other people. (Yeah)
110	Sarah:	Your occupation. You know, initially you're a child, you go to school, you went into the seminary, you chose not to do that and became a teacher. Do you think that your occupation and what, what people chose as their occupation, has importance or relevance to, to their self-care?
111	Gerry:	Well of course it does. I mean I would be...very strong at this stage of my life, in saying that you should only work at something which you like. And that presumably would tie in with your own particular gifts are and if you do that, it will obviously enhance your life, if you don't it'll probably damage and may cause irreparable damage at a personal level to your life.
112	Gerry:	But I would also feel, just in my own case, and I suppose it's true of many people, having got into teaching, without...what I would consider maybe enough emotional and personal awareness....it took me some time before I began to realise the extent

		to which I should be looking after myself, particularly as a teacher. (Yeah, yeah)
113	Sarah:	And you spoke a lot about stories in work. Is story important in your own life, in your personal life?
114	Gerry:	I love to listen to people telling their own stories. And, and I kind of watch I suppose, for what I would consider are really good stories. For instance, recently films of course are very powerful conveyors of story. But the, one of the films I came across recently, <i>The Way Back</i> , about that story of, of people making this huge journey and...being caught up in a concentration camp in Siberia. And it disturbed me greatly...to find out that the actual story was....had question marks about it. In other words, that the guy the story had come from, whether it was genuine or not. Now I would...and funny, I hate to believe that it wasn't genuine (yeah) and I hope it was, but I know that there are question marks over it....
115	Sarah:	So is there something there about not wanting to be fed stories unless they're real?
116	Gerry:	Oh yes, yeah, very definitely. Truth is important to me, it has to be true. (Yeah, yeah) Maybe that's a bit obsessive in a way maybe because of my background, but I do, I like the stories to be true and I like to come across...what I see as true stories and I would have used a lot of those in my teaching. (Yeah)
117	Sarah:	And, this being a narrative interview, have you...how have you experienced it?
118	Gerry:	How have I experienced the interview?
119	Sarah:	Yeah, this actual space, yeah.
120	Gerry:	I suppose I'm tired now...because I know I have spoken at a deep level. I think it matters an awful lot that it's you who are conducting the interview, who I have a very close relationship with...and, talking at this level I'm aware that some of the things we would have talked about before. Probably some of the things, we haven't...
121	Gerry:	I'm also very aware that it's kind of very one-sided, has to be I suppose, it's the nature of the thing. And I suppose as, as a practice I think that's just the lack...that I suspect myself that this kind of interview...might even yield more interesting things if it was more (two-way)...if you were actually more responsive, in it. (Yeah, yeah) But I do appreciate that this was maybe the way you need to work this one.
122	Sarah:	So if it was a bit more of a two-way conversation where I was...rather than asking questions, giving my opinion on what you were saying or speaking from my own experience...
123	Gerry:	Yeah and also I think <i>that</i> could lead to a deepening of the whole thing and a...an actual development. Like I, my belief in stories is that
124	Gerry:	...and I think, maybe, I would have a question over the method in this sense, that as a true...reflection of story and life...this practice is a bit too stilted. (Yeah) And I feel, I don't know how you develop it, maybe there's another stage that should be in it, when maybe you'd come back with some questions or some responses. I'm not sure, I don't know. But it's just I'm very aware that I'm the one who...and to me that's a

		little bit....I suppose stilted is the word I would use.
125	Sarah:	And would you feel that stuff has been taken from you as opposed to shared with you or that you're not necessarily walking away with anything?
126	Gerry:	I suppose a little bit. On the other hand, I mean I knew, I mean in fairness that <i>is</i> ...what I kind of expected. Well I wasn't sure....I wasn't fully sure whether you would be more, kind of, engaged in that sense. But...I mean I'm very happy too, but I am aware that that...
127	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, that there's another level. Yeah.
128	Gerry:	Yeah, yeah.
129	Sarah:	And maybe we might revisit this. (Yeah) Yeah. So, just looking back on what we have covered, is there anything that you feel was important to be asked that wasn't asked?
130	Gerry:	In some sense I think well we covered enough (yes) so that's....I don't think the question is that. I think we <i>have</i> covered the headings that...were down to cover. (Yeah) Of course there are things which if you wanted to...there are loads of things you could add in, (engage with) but...that's enough for this time, for this day.
131	Sarah:	So there's nothing else you'd like to say. (No) Thank you very much.

TRANSCRIPT 3: DAVID – 23.3.11

1	Sarah:	So did you get a chance to have a look over the consent form?
2	David:	I did. I sent it back to you. (Oh, perfect.) I think I filled it in and sent it back so you mightn't have got that.
3	Sarah:	Yeah, no, I wasn't even looking at the emails today. (Okay, yeah) So, that's grand.
4	David:	So, I have it printed out inside if you want me to get it, because it'll be...
5	Sarah:	No, I'll tell you, I'll wait because you might decide you want to wait before you sign it.
6	David:	Yeah, okay.
7	Sarah:	You might want to see the transcript first before you sign anything. So, I suppose, just to, kind of for the purpose of the tape and for disclosure, for the readers (laugh), just to introduce ourselves and say who we are and our own relationship.
8	David:	Okay, you start or do you want me to start?
9	Sarah:	I don't mind starting. Sarah Bates, the researcher and I've asked you David to be one of the interviewees because, well for me, on my personal journey, I feel you're a huge part of why I'm even using this type of methodology. And Maynooth, played a huge part in allowing me to kind of, look at the 4th dimension and the spiritual element of life, and work and so, it was kind of quite symbolic for me to have you as one of the interviewees on this. So, I suppose, just to have that out in the open (laugh).
10	David:	I'm David McCormack and I'm delighted to be asked to be part of it, in that, well, you know from your contact with me, that I use writing a lot...and stillness practices and so on, do you know. So, I'm very happy to be part of this and my own doctorate is about writing practices anyway, so in some ways I'm interested in getting it to the point where I'm writing a final chapter and I'm trying to think, 'well what is this all about anyway?' (Yeah) So actually this is kind of useful to me too, so, I'm very happy to be here.
11	Sarah:	So, just to, to begin then, you've seen the Consent Form (yeah) and so far you're happy enough to proceed. (Yeah) Yeah, so, well journaling was the one that kind of came up for you there as being very important to you, so maybe even just to describe what it is that you mean by journaling.
12	David:	Okay. I suppose I have a practice of...of writing, as a form of, I suppose, stopping, stopping what I'm doing, to reflect on it. And I suppose what I mean by that is that I...I use journaling in a large hard-back notebook, to try and create time and space to stand...to connect with what I'm doing, I was going to say stand back from it but actually it's not standing back, it's standing right in the middle of it, but also thinking about it at the same time, trying to process the way I'm feeling, my own process in relation to whatever it is I'm doing. It's a space for thinking. It's a space for feeling. It's a space just to, to process my experience, to find out 'well who am I in this?'.....because, do you know, we're bombarded, I'm bombarded all the time with all sorts of stimuli, stimuli from my work and from my life. So I need a space for

13	Sarah:	myself in it. So writing creates a space for me....to, to be, so that's... You, you said, kind of that the writing allows you to stop and it's nearly a contradiction in terms that an action....can, can hold you in your space. How do you think that works?
14	David:	I can't tell you who, but I had this conversation recently with somebody and... I can't remember who it was but I said very clearly to them, or I heard myself say very clearly to them is the most important thing in my life, that I've learned, in my...decades (laugh) is stopping. That's actually the most important skill that I have developed. And that kind of seems a bit....mad to think about that, that actually stopping doing things is the most important thing. But I do think that it's...most of my problems in life and in work, come, not from the experiences I have, but all the stories I tell myself about those experiences. So stopping, I think, is actually really important, to stop and watch yourself do all that thinking or all that feeling or all that storytelling that you tell yourself. Actually having the skill to stop that, I think it, is pretty important.
15	Sarah:	And the writing allows you.....
16	David:	Stopping is one thing (yeah), I think, I think connecting is another thing. So the writing helps me to connect with my experience, especially the nuanced, layered kind of side of it, do you know and I'm not absolutely sure of what it is I'm thinking or what I'm feeling or I'm thinking so many things at the one time or I'm thinking and feeling at the same time, there's so many things happening, trying to connect with what all those things are. But particularly the parts of myself or my selves that are (pause) marginalised or that are quietened or don't have a voice, I think that's really important, to hear those (yeah), do you know.
17	Sarah:	So the idea that it's giving these quietened parts of your voice (yes) on the page??... on the page. (Yeah) And is there a process, do you need to quieten yourself first before you write or can you just go...and spill it?
18	David:	Sometimes I do that, you know...I think, I have pretty much a daily practice of writing, so that might be over coffee or it might be at night or it might be during the day or it might be after an event or... So there isn't any one process, I know in my teaching, in my classes, I do use a process of, you know, kind of connecting with the body and breath and then writing for 6 minutes, you know that kind of Jilly Bolton thing. But for myself I don't necessarily stick to, to, to any one process. Sometimes you have to kind of catch yourself unawares too
19	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. And do you think that that is an individual thing or is it with practice you can go in and out?
20	David:	I think it's an individual thing and I think....well writing doesn't suit everybody and reflecting in that way doesn't suit everybody. It happens to suit me and I happen to connect with it, but I don't have a, I don't have a strict routine about it, because I think if I did that, it would become just another thing that I do (yeah), it would become another task that I have to do, that doesn't have any freshness in it, or do you know?
21	Sarah:	So do you get called to it then at different times of the day?

22	David:	Well I think that there are, there are experiences that are disorientating...or stop you in your tracks, or stop me in my tracks. So I do particularly use it when I find myself either....you know, fed up or bored or...confused or.... So there are particular experiences that cause that I think. But I think even in the absence of those (yeah) experiences, there's an awful lot happening all the time. And...I have a really busy life, the same as yourself, so I don't get a lot of time, so in some ways writing just re-connects to the part of myself that does want to stop even though I can't always stop (yeah) Does that make sense?
23	Sarah:	Yeah, it does. Nearly let you just acknowledge your life at the speed it's going, nearly.
24	David:	Pretty much, yeah.
25	Sarah:	And where did you find it? How did you come across writing, for you?
26	David:	Well, there's a story about that. I mean, I suppose that I...in my teenage years I worked for an Arts Centre at night and kind of just...I was hanging around with a lot of musicians and artists and writers and all this kind of stuff and began to write a lot myself at that time, and then went on to study English at college and so on and so I was connected into writing methods as a way of connecting with....more of who I am than the rational, (yeah) you know the feeling dimension and so on. But I found when I was studying English in college, it was...it was just a very cognitive....it was a subject like any other, so I was kind of disappointed in it. The only model of writing that was there was, you know, you were either the sort of... do you know, a dead, famous writer or you weren't a writer at all. Do you know what I mean? You were either going to win the Nobel Prize or you didn't write. So the sense...so, so I had a lot of issues around the kind of model of learning.
27	David:	So what happened anyway, to tell the story, was that, I...I, even though I, when I came to college I wanted to do a masters in English, that's what I wanted to do, and then I kind of found it a very kind of cognitive, heady, kind of discipline so I just stopped wanting to do that. So I, I got a, I got a job in the Simon Community and at the same time I got offered a scholarship, to do a Masters and it turned out that I would get more money from the scholarship than from the teaching I was going to be doing than getting from the Simon Community, so that's what I chose anyway. But I found it very difficult to, to, to be part of a very cognitive, rational discourse, and found it very difficult to write in that way. So that's when I first began to, I got this I think..?? dark? blue, hard-back notebook and I felt completely dim-witted? and inadequate to what these very clever people were asking me to do...I didn't know how you did a Master's Thesis, I just didn't know how, how you did it. So I developed the practice of writing every day in this journal and gradually found that, even though I was just being me, and how I, you know, I didn't have any huge, big intelligent insights or anything like that, I was just reflecting on myself and what I was encountering in my learning and my entire thesis was written from that book, the hard-back notebook. So I kind of felt that I'd discovered something, that allowed you to be both...yourself, whoever you are, whoever I am, and to challenge yourself to thinking at a different level and at a deeper level than...more abstract level. So it helped me to connect with learning, is...but to connect myself with learning (yeah) rather than learning as an abstract...thing. So that's where I discovered it and I've

		kept it ever since and that was it, that was a long time ago. (Laugh) (A good 5 years now) (Laugh)
28	Sarah:	Well there's two things that stand out for me listening to that, one would be, as a teenager, to have a sense that there was more than the cognitive, strikes me as just, kind of a gift really, to have had that awareness that early on. 'Cause I know you can be around people but you might not necessarily (yeah) know what they are talking about. (Yeah) And did, did that come from somewhere?
29	David:	I've never been able to trace it. (Yeah) I don't know because, you know, certainly both parents would be very, you know, down-to-earth, you know, very...predictable, run-of-the-mill, you know. We were in business, we had a busy, busy life. And I worked in the business during the day and then went to this Arts Centre at night. I have no idea how I would have decided to do that. I have no idea whatsoever. No idea how the, you know, you end up...how I ended up, you know, of writing poetry at the age of 15, 16, 17, 18. I've no idea where that came from, no idea.
30	Sarah:	And you said that you found the English difficult and then you were, you know, you were given a scholarship. So I assume you were performing at quite a high level, but, finding the experience difficult.
31	David:	Well I was good at it (yeah) because there was a, you know, there was a, I suppose an ambitious or competitive part of me, so I wasn't going to be bested by it. But it, it wasn't what I'd felt I'd signed up to do, you know. I think that in a way, the model of English Literary Studies that I felt, that I think was prevalent at second level, and when I became a second level English teacher, I just felt it was completely different kind of model at third level. I think it was just much more connected into, into people and, and emotional connections and responses to literature. Whereas at college I just felt it a completely different thing. Plenty people I know who I know have done it and didn't feel that way, (yeah) so that was my....my experience.
32	Sarah:	But it just goes to show you can be really good at something and it not fulfil. (Absolutely) You know that whole idea that it was ignoring parts of you that wanted to be expressed.
33	David:	Or that I was not able to connect with it in the way I needed to be able to connect with it 'cause plenty other people were able to but it just didn't (do it for you)...I wasn't able to do that. Or to have a different way or...
34	Sarah:	So the journaling then, in your personal life, it sounds like, you know, you use this as a form of expression? Sort of to try and acknowledge other parts of you that weren't necessarily being heard elsewhere and then you carried it through. So like, how important has it been in your own personal life? And has it varied at different times?
35	David:	It's varied at different times, yeah. It's varied at different times, I mean I, for my doctorate, I, I ended up plotting, having to do this to look at the number of journals I've kept at different times of my life. And you know, there were, there were times of crisis when I would keep a lot more than other times when I was just too busy with young children, to, to keep them. So it was, it's been a consistent practice but has, has changed at different times....and taken different forms at different times in that, you know, through different periods it's been a sort of personal development, you

		<p>know, a therapeutic space for myself. At other times I've found it a really important part of...you, you're aware of the kind of work I do, you do similar work, and it's very interpersonal and I, I relied heavily on my supervision but also on journaling as, as a self-supervision thing. So at times I've had to do that heavily and then at other times it's been a way of thinking about my work and thinking about the significance of the stories that we all have from our work. And what is now research, if they are our practitioner stories, how, how can that become research? So that's preoccupying me as well.</p>
36	Sarah:	<p>And outside of work-related but personal stuff, would you use it on a, on a purely personal nature like, to look at relationships or to, to query yourself within your own personal life?</p>
37	David:	<p>At times. Whatever it is that's up, that is the edge (yeah, yeah), you know whatever is the, whatever is the edgiest thing in my life, tends to be what drives my need to write. Whatever is the rawest, edgiest. Or, sometimes it's not raw and edgy and yet very significant, do you know. So it can be delightful and joyful as well. But, it does tend to be whatever has me most vulnerable, is what I believe to be the most important learning for me.</p>
38	David:	<p>And the distinction then between personal and professional, in my line of work, (yeah) often, often doesn't...hold, because there's a flow there in-between...(yeah and you bring your whole self to your profession.) You do. Absolutely and, and how I go about parenting my children.....is, is relevant to how I go about doing my work. I work with groups and then I work with people, you know. So it's, my relationships are my relationships, do you know, even though there's boundaries between them, (yeah) there's certainly, a lot of ? in those boundaries.</p>
39	Sarah:	<p>You know, the way people can often say, you know, you've got your professional self and you've got your personal self and then people like Rogers would talk about being authentic, regardless of the situation. Like when I, when I'm listening to you there, I'm hearing that you might be one of those people who manages to be one of those people who manages to stay yourself, regardless, of where you are.</p>
40	David:	<p>I suppose I'd put it a bit differently in that I think that.....I think more in terms of, plural...selves, and fragmented selves. And...the need to be able to, to be aware of all those selves and the fragmentation and to be grounded in it and to be able to hold those in your body in a way, I mean it's where stillness practices come in. And particularly when, do you know, in counselling work and psychotherapeutic work and in adult education, there's an awful lot going on for people and when you're accompanying people on their own journeys....it's, it can be very fragmenting.</p>
41	David:	<p>And, you know, Rogers had the idea of, I mean of...the person-to-person relationship and I kind of envy him the simplicity of his position in some ways. It might just be a little more complex than that. (Yeah, yeah) So transference is one idea that we work a lot with in the courses we run and, but I, I think there's something in....that idea, transference, and counter-transference, where you find yourself in relationships and at the end of relationships and you just don't know what the hell's happening and who have you become for that other person and who are they for me. And...journaling is a really important part of...you know to sift through that, 'hang on, what's happening here' and 'who am i?' and 'which one of these multiple selves am I</p>

		<i>now?</i> ' and 'have I been here before or is this a new set of set, kind of parameters?' You know so I mean supervision is just hugely important, I mean...and I use journaling and writing as, a way to catch those moments, do you know, to process them.
42	Sarah:	And do you find you do, like, having an external supervisor kind of means somebody can pull you out of your own, your own head or your own confusion. And do you find...not that you would ever replace one with the other, but that the journaling can do that, that you can find the truth for yourself?
43	David:	Well, that's a really good question because in a way I, I think that it's, it's really important for me, and has been very important for me that I am, I am able to be as I am even if that's... or fragmented or all over the place....but whatever it is that is happening for me right now, I need to be able to connect with, and to articulate in some way, even though you can never do that. So that's a really important part of the process. Now, I've lost my train of thought there. If we just stay with it for a minute, I'll kind of get it back. I can't remember, can you remember your question?
44	Sarah:	It was, can you actually find your own truth in the journaling?
45	David:	Yeah, yeah. Yeah. In a way, that's a very important part of the writing process, but I have found a whole new dimension then when I began to, to come out of the journaling process, into the writing that up for public consumption, do you know. That's a whole different...experience. And then, finding, finding that that is deeply challenging too, do you know. So, I, for example, I had, I had occasion to have a series of readings of a particular thing I wrote and...it was just fascinating in that some people really connected with it and some people hated it, so they connected with it in a different way. And some very, some very close friends had very strong reactions to it, so...that became more opportunity for me to learn about the unconscious part of myself that I express in my writing too. So I suppose what I'm saying is that it wouldn't ever replace my, my supervision.
46	David:	But, I do think that journaling just for yourself....but there's another possibility too that when you start to open that reading out to other people, like Jilly Bolton's workshops do that, where she has people engage with whatever their process is, but then sharing that writing with others, a really important part of finding out....different parts of yourself, or having things mirrored back to you that you weren't aware of.
47	Sarah:	It's tough going. I'd say it is.
48	David:	But really rewarding, I mean, I'd be very...
49	Sarah:	'Cause it brings in an onlooker, an audience that you're not, that you're not bothered with when you're writing for yourself and suddenly you have to think of...the reader nearly...(yeah, yeah) And you found that people's reactions were telling you something about yourself.
50	David:	Always. Well, it's, I mean, you know, at times, you, it would be clear who that was about, I know it wouldn't be about me, (yeah) but, in a way, I think it has helped me to see that, writing's a relational thing, it's not a private thing, the language that I

		have to express things isn't mine. I, I, I have inherited it from a whole different set of cultures and, do you know, so language isn't mine, I don't own it. It doesn't describe accurately my experience, it approximates and, and I'm okay about that. And, so it's a public thing from the start, do you know. The language we use to express our private experiences is actually very public....and that's where it is important to be able to give voice to...the quieter, more vulnerable, more silenced parts of ourselves, do you know. To be able to...develop our voice, or develop my own voice, to be able to enquire into my own experience...the kind of parts of it that are less acceptable, or less....in tune with dominant modes of thinking, do you know.
51	Sarah:	And there is a relationship with that and it being public?
52	David:	I think so. I think so. I, well, certainly when I began writing it was absolutely for myself and it was a completely safe place in which...to be. But, there is something about writing and expression and what I was doing was expressing aspects of my experience and expression....what wasn't presupposed as a hearer, do you know. Sometimes I'm that hearer (yeah). But I think, over the years, a part of it is about actually validating my own experience and having that validated by others.
53	Sarah:	And do you think that...wish or need or want is personal or do you think it's something that kind of evolves with writers, like if you do journal and continue to journal, that it's kind of like an evolution to look for...to have a louder voice?
54	David:	Well, I, I suppose I think of singing when you ask that question, there are people who sing in the shower and don't ever sing anywhere else and...so there is something about singing that is just about itself, it's just something you do and it doesn't demand an audience. But, I think there's something about it too, I mean you write songs, you don't just write them for yourself. You write them, even though you write them for yourself, there's almost something inherent in that process about presupposing hearers and an/then audience.
55	Sarah:	That actually makes sense to me now. Like the idea that, you know, you are obviously writing for yourself but if you discover something, you do want to share, you kind of like want to pass it on or you want to get that bit of feedback, so I can understand now that kind of sense of public, yeah. And you said, earlier on, that...you know you never really verbalise the experience as such and is that like, do you mean like in reference to the limitations of language? (Yeah) Like do you find anywhere else then, do you use other practices to acknowledge the experience that can't be put into words?
56	David:	That's interesting, yeah. I'm not sure what you mean by that.
57	Sarah:	I suppose, kind of switching to the mindfulness stuff. Those are places where you don't, you know, language is nearly banned (laugh). Do you know like, that it's about feeling and experiencing and getting in touch and quietening, at times, the mind and the vocabulary.
58	David:	Well that's helpful. I do think as I said to you earlier on, the most beautiful thing I've learned in my life, is to stop. That is absolutely the first thing. I've also learned other ways through writing, of working with what I experience when I stop, but the most important thing is to have a period of time every day, when I stop, everything.

59	Sarah:	What does that look like? What...
60	David:	I, I have a meditation practice that I engage in every day. And, so for...I mean, different days it works differently. But my basic commitment is to a 20 minute mindfulness practice each day. When the kids are in bed. So when the kids go to bed, that's when I do that. Which means it's at the end of the day, not to be recommended in all that kind of stuff but that's what I get, with the time I get. And....that is....the most useful practice that I have. Do you know, I can imagine writing not being, I can imagine stopping as a practice. I can't imagine the mindfulness stopping as a practice.
61	Sarah:	Why is that?
62	David:	It's a basic, it's basic to my life. The, the capacity to...to stop everything, to connect with my body, to connect as closely as I can do with my experience as I experience it, to become aware of the ways in which I interrupt all of that. To, to be aware of, you know, my, my...crazy mind, that we all have, do you know, that just does what it does and keeps on doing what it's doing. And most of the time it's...telling me stories about my experiences, do you know, it's...and I can never be fully in touch with experience, I don't think anybody can do that, but I can get closer to it. Writing helps me get closer to it like Natalie Goldberg's book, 'Writing the Bare Bones' I think it's called, so she talks about, writing as a Zen practice. It's not like that for me but I can appreciate that it is for her. But certainly mindfulness is, you know, a skilled practice each day in the basic kind of....for the past 20 or more years.
63	Sarah:	Where did that come from?
64	David:	Where did that come from? That's a very good question. I kind of know where the writing has come from, but...I know that, I don't know. I, I always had a connection with, you know, my other friends were playing soccer and stuff like that, I was, I was involved in Judo and then I was involved in Yoga and that kind of stuff and then I did a, a series of workshops with a Zen monk, a long time ago, I don't know how long ago, and adapted that practice since.
65	Sarah:	Even the Judo is quite...like the movements are quite Tai Chi, or even the breathing and the control...(yeah) So you've just always kind of been attracted to that kind of stuff (laugh)?
66	David:	Yeah it appealed to my imagination in a way, that, you know, the things that other friends were doing didn't, you know. But as it happens now I'm very much a soccer fan now. I'm just back from Liverpool, we've been to a match and so on. So, it isn't to the exclusion of those things....but, just, I think, my imagination wanted something a little more...I don't know..(deeper?)(laugh)) Deeper.
67	Sarah:	So the mindfulness, like would that be a whole body experience for you?
68	David:	Well, I, a good part of it is....an embodied experience.
69	Sarah:	And the journaling then, is that, is it slightly more the body observing the cognitive or can it be whole body for you as well?

70	David:	Sometimes it's, it's about my body, sometimes quite a bit of it, but I suppose embodied as in....the way in which I experience the world through my body as well, do you know. So...textures and nuances and subtle feelings and, and subtle sensations aroused so, yeah, yeah.
71	Sarah:	And you write them?
72	David:	At times. I mean I don't have any one thing I do, (yeah) I really don't. (But you have done?) Yeah absolutely, there are times that my...do you know, when I was training as a therapist, my training was a body work training or at least it incorporated a significant element of body work. There were 3 stages to it and one was Humanistic and the second was Psychodynamic and the third was Bio-dynamic, so it was about the body. So, body work has been a very important part of...my own professional development, if you like.
73	Sarah:	And, and I suppose I'm interested in the fact that, you know, you could be writing about touch and things like that. Do you find that your writing style changes depending on...what part of you it's coming from? Like would it come out more poetic or shorter?
74	David:	Not really, no. Not really, I don't think it, I don't think, I think what I just try to do is to connect with whatever it is I happen to be experiencing at any one time. (Yeah) Do you know, whatever it happens to be (yeah), whatever that happens to be.
75	Sarah:	So the kind of mindfulness practices that you engage with are quite meditative, kind of quiet 20 minutes in the evening. And would you engage in any other type of practices?
76	David:	Tai Chi and Yoga
77	Sarah:	So the whole...movement.
78	David:	Well the Tai Chi is interesting because it's, you know Yoga is, is kind of something, you know, it, you do your exercises and so on. But Tai Chi is different in that it actually is quite a, a relational thing too. People don't know that about Tai Chi but the training is very much about working with other people. And working with their....getting to know where their energy is and how their energy is and so on. Do you know, so it's quite....it's an interesting practice too.
79	Sarah:	You do that with other people?
80	David:	Well I, I have....I did up until a year ago and I moved to....go to a particular class so now I'm on the point of going back again. So Tai Chi, Yoga, meditation.
81	Sarah:	So Tai Chi, Yoga then, would you do that at home, or is it actually something that you like to do with others?
83	David:	I like to go out once a week to a class. (Yeah) (laugh) Just to get out of the house. I don't know, I would, I'd do either Yoga or Tai Chi or meditation or 2 of the 3 of them or most days.

84	Sarah:	And you obviously, from being in your class, you bring that kind of mindfulness and those meditative practices into group work.
85	David:	I think I do. Yeah, I think, you know, you'd have experienced it. Certainly I think there's very little else you can do, without being in your body, do you know. So if I have, if I have anything that I teach in my classes, I think it's, one of them is to be in your body, and to be able to be present to yourself on the basis that you cannot be present to another person if you cannot be present to yourself. And, I think secondly, to be able to, to process what you become aware of in relationships with others. I think that's the second thing that I....they are really what I work with really, those two things, it's fairly simple I know but it's...that's what I work with.
86	Sarah:	It's missing a lot of the time.
87	David:	It's missing a lot of the time, I do think so yeah.
88	Sarah:	And does that develop? Sorry.
89	David:	No, now that I, there is a third thing that I, I....do feel that is very important both to the writing and to, how, what I do with the teaching and that kind of thing and...I think it is that....vulnerability is absolutely inevitable in everybody's life. It is just literally, it's just there, it's going to happen, it is necessary. We can't not go through life without it, it just....And I think I've had to take, to work very hard in my life to learn how to....to lean into it rather than lean away from it. So, I think again, I think a third thing in how I teach is about....trying to learn from whatever my feelings are of....vulnerability or distress or, being unbalanced in some way, do you know, so finding a way to enquire into that, to lean into it and to...because that's where I really think, where adult learning happens. It doesn't happen for me from stuff I feel fine about. It happens for me from stuff I <i>don't</i> feel fine about and I needed help in being able to lean into it. So I use my supervision, my writing and so on. And I think that's a third thing that I bring to my teaching.
90	Sarah:	Vulnerability, like for me as your student, was huge, for me over the 2 years. And I think, now, you know, taking it that bit further, but, that idea of incorporating it and accepting it and seeing the beauty in it and the ...the human side of it, you know, rather than trying not to be vulnerable and be all these things. It certainly, it's changed my life, you know, something that simple, it's always the simple things that we kind of miss and that are huge (yeah) and life-changing (yeah) and very precious, that vulnerability, yeah.
91	David:	I think that that's helpful, because in a way, that simple lesson if you like...it never happens outside of a space, do you know, I mean, I think....I just think that I know that I need spaces in it to happen and writing creates one psychic space for that, supervision creates another...you know, supportive relationships create space for that. Challenging relationships create a space for that, do you know. But without some space created, that doesn't happen, do you know. (Yeah) So I think, I think what I learned all those years ago when I started writing was that I....when things are still in my head they go around and around and around. But if I can create a space, for thinking about them, so writing what I think literally is what I'm saying.

92	Sarah:	That sounds like the end of a process as well because it ends it. It allows it to come down and out and be heard and dealt with...the process. (Absolutely) And the whole, it's not easy to bring mindfulness into a room, especially if, if it's, if you don't know who you have in the room as well, you know, and...it's those things that people are being taught in school, you know most people discover later on, if indeed they discover it at all. So, it must take a lot of practice to get to the point where you feel natural and the group accept what you're doing. I mean, was it like that? Was it something that developed?
93	David:	That's an interesting question too.
94	Sarah:	Did you come straight out of practice and, when doing group work, automatically always include that kind of body work.
95	David:	Well I know that when I was a secondary school teacher...I know I did well in my thesis in...my teacher training in creative writing and, you know, the creative writing classes had quite a lot of that kind of body experience and so on, even though at that stage I knew nothing about meditation as such. And, when I was in my early years in this job, a lot of what I was doing was in community development and community leadership and I, I, I don't think I had the, the confidence at that point to bring this part of my life in, (yeah) in to it. So I think it was really....I guess when you do training as a therapist, a lot of what you do is about connecting with your experience and connecting with your body. And a big part of my journey here, in this kind of learning setting, has been to be able to make what I learn from my therapeutic training relevant to a learning setting and to research and to writing and to teaching.
96	David:	So I....we're, we're running a project at the moment with schools, with personnel from...teachers from schools, you know. We call it fostering the emotional climate of the school. And just trying again to give people the message that there's emotional stuff happening all the time. You can recognise it or not recognise it but it's happening all the time. And, you as a teacher, it's okay to feel....vulnerable about this kind of stuff, it is okay to feel stuff. And not only okay, maybe it's really important that you feel it and you can't really help kids in distress, if you don't have a way of dealing with your own distress. So I think the lesson, I really think that that is becoming addressed now in....in teaching, you know. I think that's....will spill out in the wider world, (yeah) in very small ways though, but I'd be happy about how it is happening.
97	Sarah:	So it does sound like....your own learning and your own confidence around your own sense of self and body now extend to you being able to bring it into a classroom?
98	David:	Yeah. Yes, I guess. Or else another way of putting it as well, this is all I do (laugh) so, I may as well do it my own way. And this is, this is what I got so, if it makes sense to people and works for them, then I'll still have a job, next year (laugh). And if it doesn't, then I'm really going to have to think about it. But it just still does seem like it does...that it would be a mistake for me to try and do it a different way. Equally I'm sure it would be a mistake for other people to try and do it my way. (Yeah, yeah, yeah) But I do think some kind of sense of...mindfulness, I think is really important for interpersonal work, I really think so. I can't see how people do it otherwise. So this is what I got, this is the message I have, not the message, the experience I have that I, I work out of.

100	Sarah:	So, to kind of summarise the impact it has on your professional job in groups or whatever, it sounds, like, for you, it's the core element, like if you're not...if you haven't connected with your body then you're not present, (yeah) which kinds of makes everything, maybe not the right word, but somewhat superficial if it's not on a deeper level or if it's, if you're not connected how can you connect to others?
101	David:	Yeah. Even though sometimes once you've connected into or what you're aware of is that you are all over the place, (yeah) do you know. But, I think mindfulness is being aware of what's happening when it's happening. So, even being aware of not being present I think is a way of being present, (yeah, yeah) do you know. And sometimes that's important too.
102	David:	You know, I think it's important to be able...to be all over the place as well, do you know, rather than all together, tightly held. So sometimes being all over the place allows for you to become aware of different kinds of stuff and be not sure about things and, you know, feel a bit upset about them, so you, that makes you go even more deeply. Do you know (yeah). So I think that's important, as important as being, you know the way Rogers always talked about being all in a piece and all together. That isn't my experience, do you know. Much more likely to feel fragmented than together, but that gives permission for other people to feel that way too.
103	Sarah:	So one of the big learnings again I took from you was 'if you're confused, you're on the right path', do you know (laugh). If it was all sorted, sure what are you doing here like (laugh), you know. (Yeah) That the confusion was the sign that you were learning (yeah), that you were growing.
104	David:	And I do think so. And that's what I really mean by vulnerability, that if we can lean into the vulnerability, there's probably some change going to happen. (There's something on the other side?) There's something. Yeah, yeah. So the idea of a ...space or a threshold space, where you're just not on certain ground, you don't know where you are or why, what you're doing there, or what's happening, but if you can be held, if you can hold yourself and be held in that, I believe that that's, that's growth.
105	Sarah:	So, that kind of explains why you would be using the whole mindfulness or the stillness within the classroom and then the journaling, are you using it for...for the same reasons you use it or is there another dimension if you use it with a group?
106	David:	Well...well, I think that, I think we use it a lot on, I use it on a number of different programmes that I run. And what I try and do is....I think, to move back to my discovery in that blue, hard-back journal, of, that learning wasn't something that I decided myself, it was something, it was how was I connecting with the learning, what sense did I make, so the meaning-making thing. So that if I can make...if I can enter into that I will learn, do you know. That, that's genuine learning, (yeah) that's adult learning if you like (yeah). And because my whole job is about facilitating adult learning, I kind of have a sense that if, in the spaces I create with people, and I use writing to do this, if I can try and help them to identify, what it is that they're having a reaction to, either positive or negative, if I can....try and help them to enquire into

		their own emotional response to whatever it is, they will be making meaning out of it, and that is learning. And that part of, part of the, part of the job of writing is being able to articulate that, to piece together the jigsaws, (yeah) if you like, to create some kind of an account of your own experience of learning that is coherent, that is true for you to...true enough, even though it can never be, (yeah) you know. So that....so those things I think allow people....to connect with learning as an embodied, meaning-making process rather than as, you know, the vacuum (yeah) concept of stuffing knowledge into your head.
107	David:	It doesn't work for everybody but I do think, I, you know, I know you're very familiar with auto-ethno-graphy as a research approach, but I think it's an important...learning tool as well. That it, it really is an important way for people to come to learn about.....to, to become learners, to learn from their own lives, and to create learning from their experience because you can never experience without learning from it. But, but being an adult learner means you need to be able to learn from it.
108	Sarah:	Thanks. So, so not to completely leave them aside but just to move on to the concept of kind of self-care and wellbeing. Big words (laugh). And I'm also that you've already described the journaling and the mindfulness you were using in order to connect with yourself. And what would <i>your</i> understanding of kind of self-care and wellbeing be?
109	David:	Okay. That's an interesting idea to bring in to it. I know from your notes that you were going to do that but it is an interesting way of...of thinking about it. Again, just to come back to the stopping business, I do think stopping is a really important part of wellbeing. Most of the time, if I have health difficulties or, do you know, if it's, not necessarily because of my experiences because all the stories I tell myself about my experiences, most of the time, I think. I think when you're working with people particularly, I do think that you're in other people's space, they're in your space there, there's all kinds of subtle things happening, things happen on subtle and unconscious levels and I just feel they need to be processed and untangled to find out 'who's it?' 'is it me or him or her or...what's happening here?' So I do think that the weaving part of it is....trying to stay related but separate, in so far as I can....so I think that that's a very important part of wellbeing...in this kind of work, you know, in interpersonal work.
110	David:	I think that supervision, you know, again, I just wouldn't, I wouldn't be doing any of this work without it. I just can't imagine, can't imagine how I ever did it without, I suppose what I had within formal support spaces. But I wouldn't be without a formal structure now...
111	Sarah:	And what is it that that gives you? That you...
112	David:	A space to get clear. A space to get clear about what's happening, to me (yeah). What I can own, particularly a space to become clearer about what are the unconscious or the less conscious processes at work, the things that are out of my awareness or the things that are just a little bit offside or that I'm not letting in because they're too...uncomfortable, (yeah) too.... So it's a clearing space.
113	Sarah:	So, for you to be wellbeing or to have wellbeing, like what exactly does that mean to

114	David:	<p>you, 'cause for others, one of those things would be additional things, they might not be core to ones wellbeing.</p> <p>Well I, I mean, certainly I wouldn't be able to do my job here, in this setting, without some form of reflection and reflective practice or reflexive practices, I just wouldn't be able to do that. I'd get too confused, I'd get too tangled up. I'd either be too close to people or too separate from them. So, part of the wellbeing is just to be, to have a clearing space.</p>
115	David:	<p>But another key part of it is just actually being able to...have boundaries as well, do you know, to, so I generally don't work at night. I generally work from 9 until 6. And then the evening is for myself and the kids and my wife. That's, I play music and I, so you know, I do other things. But I didn't always do that, I did...in my early days in this kind of work, it was, kind of...in adult education there were no boundaries at that time, it was just, you did whatever needed to be done, but I wouldn't do that now. So I do have kind of fairly...solid, kind of, finish, you know, I take my breaks, I take my holidays.</p>
116	Sarah:	<p>And in your own personal life, to stay well and for self-care, they...like if there's a checklist, okay in relation to work you've got your reflexivity and your, your spaces for that. And then how do you care of yourself outside, and the rest of yourself?</p>
117	David:	<p>Well again, I, I think, I look after my body, that's very important, you know, so I eat well, I've a good diet, I take breaks, I do my Yoga and meditation. You know, I have stillness practices, I have Tai Chi. I walk. I have friends and, do you know, so...</p>
118	Sarah:	<p>Do you think that they feed into each other? Do you know like, if you're being mindful, then you will mindfully choose good food and things like that?</p>
119	David:	<p>Well I think that that might be true. I think that that might be true, yeah. I think, that <i>might</i> be true. I'm not absolutely certain about that now.</p>
120	Sarah:	<p>Well it might not be true for you.</p>
121	David:	<p>Yeah.</p>
122	Sarah:	<p>I find now the more mindful I am becoming and the more practices I engage with...like my body lets me know very quickly (laugh) if it doesn't like what I ate or...even, I've had a cold for the last week and I did a mindful day, like a full day of it and I haven't been well since, and I know it's all (laugh)...but I'm much closer to my body the more I do that. (There you go, yeah, yeah.) But I'm not sure that that's everybody's....(yes, yeah) direct experience.</p>
123	David:	<p>Well, I suppose that, I...I think that....rigidity for me, is, not a useful position. It's probably as important for me to, to break rules even though there are rules, they're my rules (yeah) and everything else, do you know. So...so I, I think that part of mindfulness actually for me is...not buying it lock, stock and barrel, because it could easily become yet another...('have-to') 'have-to', yeah, and another defence, do you know, against the chaos of the world, do you know, rather than a way of being with it, it's a defence against it, do you know. (Yeah) So I think it is important for me to...I do have my mindfulness practice. I have a daily practice. But it is as important for me to not do that and to be, to, you know, than to require myself to do it, do you</p>

		know. So, I think what I'm saying is that....to your question, I think it might be as important for me to, really to allow whatever is, do you know, even if that is that I've eaten too much or eaten the wrong thing or drank too much or whatever. That's, that's, that's also a challenge to allow all of that and just to be with all of that, rather than, you know, to be dutifully mindful. (Yeah) That'd just be my input, do you know. (Yeah, yeah, the choice) Yeah, and to be aware of what's happening when it's happening, so that if I'm, you know, you know the way you can get really stressed so that you do all the things that you need to do to create time for your meditation, that's a bit mad, do you know, it'd just be much better not to have the meditation time and to do whatever it is you have to do, mindfully. And of course, like everybody else, I'm sure, I break all those rules too.
124	Sarah:	That sounds healthier (yeah), you know it's probably a better state of wellbeing to be able to do what you want.
125	David:	And flexibility too, you know. I think, yeah, it is about flexibility, I do think that that's an important quality in this (yeah, yeah) too, for me.
126	Sarah:	Yeah. And it is, it's the difference between doing things in order to have self-care and through self-care. You know because lots of people would do a, b and c because they know it's good for them (yeah), but they could still have the breakdown (true) or it doesn't filter down, because it's not choice and it's ticking a box and it is different (yeah, true) but perhaps the same method, do you know.
127	David:	That's true, that's true. That is very true.
128	Sarah:	So, I don't even really have to ask the question 'cause it's obvious your occupation is...so much part of who you are that it seems to be, like your, but one of the same, you know you bring yourself into your work and your work is a reflection of your own practices, your own beliefs...and who <i>you</i> are.
129	David:	I would think so. I think so. I don't see any other way I could do it, do you know. But yeah, I, I think I'm doing what I want to do. I think well, I happen to be very lucky to have found a space, that allows me to be...that allows the parent part, the writer part, the part of me that's a monk somewhere, well I'm a parent, you know, there's all these different parts. I just happen to be able to be in a very supportive and challenging place that allows those parts of me to call to be, and to, to sit easily all together. They don't always sit easily all together either but...it's, the place is supportive enough to allow that (yeah, yeah).
130	Sarah:	So, obviously in relation to wellbeing, I mean, it's ideal, it's even got those challenges, you know. It's an ideal scenario, where you would have an occupation where you can bring all the different parts of yourself and, particularly when you do teach on Adult Guidance courses. When occupation isn't reflective of a person or who they are, how would you see that, kind of, impacting on somebody's wellbeing? Or the potential to impact?
131	David:	I suppose that I am aware, even as you ask the question that in many ways...I, the role that I have has evolved over many, many years. And that, it was a very big struggle to, to, you know, to....to allow this to happen and a lot of coincidences happened to allow it to happen, do you know. So it was very difficult for years,

		working in a university with, without really feeling that I wanted to participate in a very rational...discourse that valued certain kinds of learning and not other kinds of learning. So really, it's taken a long time to evolve into...what it is now. And, it, it isn't always ideal as it is now.
132	David:	But I think....of course, I think when people are in situations that are oppressive or it is very, very, very distressing....and, I think there is very little that's worse in life than unfilled potential, unfulfilled potential. You know, so if you have dreams and needs and wants and talents and you're in a vocational situation in which they're just, not only not used or not valued, that they're no valued, it's very distressing, so I can't imagine how one would be well in that, do you know. But, at the same time, part of adult life is actually looking that squarely in the face, as much as you can, and saying 'what is there other than...', you know, 'how did I get myself into this?' 'What's the meaning of it now?', 'what is the growthful thing to do?' 'Do I need to make some changes?' 'What do I need to accept?', do you know. 'How can I work with myself in this situation?', which is what we all have to do all the time, (yeah) is work with ourselves in the situation we find ourselves.
133	David:	Then there's a French writer called Elaine Sesu? who talks about experiences that evict us from ourselves, are really important experiences. And she, she writes or she talks about writing and the experiences that evict us from ourselves are they're really, they're the ones that we learn from. So I think that there are vocational situations that evict us from ourselves and we really need to work with them, really strongly.
134	Sarah:	It's what we do with it.
135	David:	It <i>is</i> what we do with it.
136	Sarah:	And, this is the curious part of me. You talk about a lot of coincidences happening to bring you to this point, and maybe into an institution that wasn't attracted to you. You weren't attracted to at one point anyway. Do you believe they were coincidences or do you kind of believe the harmony of life-purpose. It sounds like, you know, you managed to create something that is quite satisfying to you. But you've also brought a dimension to the college that may not have been here before.
137	David:	Well, there were certainly a series of chances. There were...I can only look upon them as chances. So, in my vocational life...there, the plaudits I had from my...my life were very simple, I was a secondary school teacher, I was a very happy secondary school teacher, so I taught English and French. And I planned to do that for a number of years and then qualify as a Guidance Counsellor. There, that was my plan. But it was in a recession. There wasn't any of those kinds of, you know, opportunities. I...my, I had, I had deliberately a masters, an adequate masters, I just didn't want to teach in university setting, I wanted to teach in a secondary school setting. So, I was unemployed, I was...and you know, somebody said, 'well, you know, why don't you go talk to so-and-so?', such and such a person in the college, they had 9 months project going. So I went and talked to them and got that work and I worked here for a number of years and made a number of attempts to go back to secondary schooling and was prevailed upon to stay and I stayed but I went to training as a therapist to, again to direct myself out of this kind of model of learning. I just didn't...see myself here. And then found more and more, that what I was

		doing, that kind of training, was more and more....there were more and more opportunities opening up, for me to use that here. So here I am, you know, several decades later, you know.
138	David:	So, again Sesu? talks about, you know when you try and control things with your ego....when you're not in control, do you know, you just aren't. So I, all my attempts to get what I want, and to do what I want and all that kind of thing, I think I did have to allow them, things to unfold in their own way. Whether I would see, I probably wouldn't call that my purpose, not preordained life purpose. I do, believe strongly in, the kind of dance between, working hard, which I do, sticking at things, which I do, and allowing them to have their own life, which I also have to do, to allow things to unfold, to become, and for me to become in it. So I do think, you know, it happenstance and choice are, there's a dance between them.
139	Sarah:	And if it's okay to ask. You know, you are a person who is quite in touch with all the different elements of yourself and you bring it into the work and you're quite spiritual in yourself. Do you have an outer spirituality, like, is, do you believe in a higher power? Do you feel any of this stuff is related? Like is the mindfulness more than yourself? Or is it just, is it within your own sense of spirit?
140	David:	Well, I think, how I'll answer that is that...I bring the kids up within a certain tradition, within the Catholic tradition because that's, do you know, like my first language, so...I'm not going to decide to bring them up as Buddhists or do you know....I think there are traditions that are very similar and you know when you look at the similarities they are quite similar. I think that I find the, the easier to think in terms of a Buddhist world view, in that it's, it's really about working with your experience as you experience it, rather than taking on a whole set of beliefs that are about....a higher power that is elsewhere, do you know. So I think I'd sit easier with those kinds of views than I would with the traditional Catholic views, but that's really just about different cultures and how different cultures have developed...views of, you know, the universe and how it works. So I think I've been heavily influenced by Buddhist views, I think that they, they certainly make more rational sense to me. But as I said earlier, I'm, you know, I was born within a certain (yeah) cultural tradition and, you know, like my language, I'm not about to taint it. I can learn other languages though.
141	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. And you talk about the inter-connectedness, and Buddhism is very much, you know the non-self entities and the whole idea that everything is connected and everything is life because of everything else (yes). And even that....sense of, of stopping to try to control and allow things to just...inter-connect, like is it any accident that, that that's your view as well, like is that how you would, like, has that become part of you now?
142	David:	You're absolutely right.
143	Sarah:	Yeah, thanks. So, I suppose my approach to this research has been narrative, largely influenced by yourself (laugh) and my experience last year of doing a narrative piece. There was just huge learning in it. And even hearing my <i>own</i> story, let alone other people hearing it, just brought a whole new dimension to the thing. So I just wanted to try and learn how to do that for others. And I'm very aware that I'm learning and that particularly when it comes to using it as a research technique, you're trying to

144	David:	<p>break away from the rules and at the same time, it's quite unconscious that you keep rules, you know, that you've been taught, so there is a bit of a conflict. But, you're doing your PHD in narrative, so why is narrative and storytelling so important, like why is it something you've decided to focus on?</p> <p>Well, I think, I think I found again being in a university for, for many years, I, there was a certain way of viewing knowledge and learning as disembodied and, you know...almost as if knowledge was not contextual and not dependent on the person who was knowing, you know so in other words it was depositing that knowledge was out there, it was outside of people and could be stuffed into people's heads and I could never be that kind of knower, you know, I just couldn't do that. And, so for many, many years I just, you know, the only model of learning and knowledge and of research that was available were the, you know that kind of pseudoscientific....impersonal, disembodied, (yeah) version of knowledge. And yet, the more I spoke to people, the more I realised that how much resided in the stories we tell about...I mean, we sit in this very room and case review and talk about practices of, you know, talk about our practices with clients. And just, the level of knowledge that people have is just mind-blowing literally. And, but it was difficult to find a way for that, to become research (yeah), because the...it seemed like the models that were there, you know, they weren't reflexive, they were impersonal, they were disconnected, disembodied. So, I suppose it just took a long, long time to realise that there are people out there who are doing...who are developing approaches to research, that honour the things I wanted to be honoured. And when, I set out to find out more about them and to, you know, to learn about them and develop an expertise with them, and to try and use them to, to help people to articulate their knowledge and their practitioner knowledge, rather than the versions of knowledge that are, belong to, you know... People were removed...from real life situations.</p>
145	David:	<p>So that's really what I set out to do. So, story and particularly auto-ethno-graphy and reflexivity became really important ways for me to, to allow people both to have their story but also to...and that to be knowledge and research. So that's where the narrative piece, I think, comes in for me, it allows me to do that.</p>
146	Sarah:	<p>And the storytelling...sounds like it was important from very early on if you were writing poetry (yeah) at 14, 15 and even the way you talk about your own thoughts, you know you describe them as narratives, you tell yourself about your experience and all. Do you remember knowing, or being attracted to story when you were young?</p>
147	David:	<p>Not particularly. I mean, in a way, you know, I think part of one of the things I found out in doing my thesis is that, in a way, I mean I grew up in a small town in Ireland, you know, in the context of a business, when, you know, there wasn't too much that was about literature or, you know, the stories were of, you know, survival in a small town in business when, during very uncertain times. My own father was a very good storyteller and, you know, told stories all his life. But, during those formative years, the stories were about survival, they weren't about the finer things of life or anything like it. It was about survival.</p>
148	David:	<p>I think what, I think what discovering...stories and literature did for me, in my, in those, sort of teenage years, was it offered me...a way to express my experience of myself, particularly the experience of the emotional self, that, do you know, I just</p>

		didn't have a language before that for that side, you know, in fact I remember discovering poetry and discovering that other people had these experiences of themselves, self-experiences, I thought it was just me. So, other people were able to experience the complexity of their self-experience and articulate it and express it in small ways. And I think that that's what I'm still trying to do, is just to find ways to capture small epiphany moments.....in a way that expresses them (yeah).
149	David:	Like you know, like you writing songs, it's an aesthetic experience of yourself in the world and, you know, it demands an expression in some ways, somewhat. So I think that that's where the, my early experiences of narrative came in.
150	Sarah:	The way...even, moving from the positivist to more kind of quantitative research but on a very fundamental level. Like taking fact and turning it to, like moving toward storytelling. If you tell something quite factually, people understand it, but if you actually make it personal and throw in all the messy stuff, (yeah) it may seem like it's far more subjective, but people relate far better to honesty that isn't factual, (yeah) there's something truer about not having to be so true and so factual.
151	David:	Well you see there, there are very few facts. Most of the time, I think, what we think of in terms of facts are actually, you know (interpretations), they're interpretations of the world.
152	Sarah:	Yeah, maybe that's why people can relate, cause it's free to relate and you can disagree (yeah, yeah)and move and shift ...than somebody saying it <i>is</i> this way.
153	David:	Yeah. But then most of the time, our work of experiencing the world is interpretation. (yeah) I think that you're absolutely right to use that word. That is how we experience the world, by interpreting things, do you know. And the more you can put flesh on that, I think (yeah) the more people can relate to it. (Yeah, yeah)
154	David:	At the same time, I think it's very important that there were, you know, do you know if I'm being treated by a, in a hospital for a serious disease, I (laugh), do you know, I like to know that whoever it is that is treating me is working on the basis of pretty sound knowledge, (laugh) do you know. I remember somebody explaining it that, in terms of, you know, when she was flying back to England, she said 'well I fly back to England today, I want to know that the Ryanair pilot (isn't feeling it) (laugh) actually knows what he's doing, that it's not an interpretation, that he knows how to do that thing', so there is knowledge, but, but the world isn't divided into fact and interpretation. It's, it's, they're two...
155	Sarah:	there's doing and there's experience (laugh). So, I suppose, I have approached this interview from a narrative kind of take on things. And I found it difficult in the sense that you can read something but knowing what it looks like and recreating it, is a completely different thing and having not experienced a narrative interview, having not been at the receiving end of one and not being able to kind of witness one, I'm still lost and I'm not sure that it even matters, but you know, kind of lost in the 'was it narrative or wasn't it?' but as long as it kind of does the job I suppose (laugh). And I kind of feel that, you know, hopefully from each interview to the next, it will become you know, I'll find that place where I want to be. But for <i>you</i> , what was this experience like, as an interview?

156	David:	Well, I think, I think it was very interesting and I think, I think the...it was very useful for <i>me</i> , I can't imagine it being useful for <i>you</i> . But it was certainly very useful for me.
157	David:	I think what...in a way, there isn't any one thing, that is a narrative interview. So, how will I put this? I think what you now do with it, (yeah) is probably...a question about narrative, do you know. I had an experience recently in working with something, whereby I'd interviewed another, a number of people, about 6, 7 people. And, I first of all wrote up an account, a straight-forward account, a chronological account of them and I found that very unsatisfying. And then I began to think 'well, you know, I've to try and make sense of it'. So then what I did was I did the standard social science qualitative research thing, which is, you know, to look at the content of what people said and try to do (analysis) an analysis, a thematic analysis. And I did that, and then that was very unsatisfying (laugh). And then ended up coming, coming back to doing, to doing a chronological story of the meaning I made of it that included chronological time but also included narrative time, which is kind of different, do you know, (yeah) one is an insight and so on. So, I think...I don't think the middle one is...well there are narrative researchers who do that, so that's, that might be narrative interviewing, do you know.
158	David:	So there isn't any one thing (yeah) that's narrative, because in a way, one of the things you've been doing is, is also life-story research because that's what you've been asking me about. So, I think you will find it useful to look at....Meryl and Hunt have a book on interviewing. I'll send you a reference for it when you're back from (laugh).
159	David:	But I suppose a narrative interview as I understand it, there isn't any one thing to understand by it, but it's interactive which I think in some ways this was. I think the most satisfying parts of the interview for me were when you were also involved, do you know. And that would prompt me to think in different ways and where the more strictly social science interview would keep you out of it, do you know. So I think it's important for you to be in it, (yeah, yeah) because that creates a synergy or creates different meaning-makings (yeah, yeah) you know.
160	Sarah:	And if you were to re-do it would you like more of what?
161	David:	Well it worked for me. (Yeah, yeah) I don't know if it worked for you but it worked for me.
162	Sarah:	Well I very much got what I wanted.
163	David:	Okay, that's good, that's good, yeah.
164	Sarah:	And I do feel with the narrative, it's like this is only the middle of the story, so I can't arrive at the end yet, for myself, (absolutely) you know, I'm in this story (laugh).
165	David:	Even though part of you is trying to make sense of it and trying to play the end game of it, you know.
166	Sarah:	I think the part, I think there's part of me trying to get it right (yeah) and that, my, being attracted to narrative was the whole point, was that there wasn't a right and a

		wrong. But that's what I mean by trying to break the rules and not being able to forget about them at the same time. (Absolutely, yeah) So trying to go 'have I done (absolutely) what that was supposed to be?' (Yeah) And then what I <i>have</i> found is I have, I've been fairly true to myself. Do you know like, I think obviously you bring a bit of nerves in or consciousness but I've been fairly true. This is my third interview and each person has experienced it completely different. (Really?) And I think at <i>this</i> point now, I'm kind of learning it's the control thing, it's you can't actually get it right for each person because they're their own character in this story (that's interesting) and you just play it out and hope for the best, you know. And each bit is learning even if it doesn't feel particularly good at the end. (Yeah) So it's been <i>very</i> interesting (laugh). Was there anything that I <i>didn't</i> ask that you feel is important to ask or to say.
167	David:	Well, about...how you're clarifying for yourself what your own stillness practices are and your own mindfulness and your writing practices, do you know. Those kinds of things. I'm interested in, in you saying that. I mean are you finding...in this enquiry, (yeah) it might actually be easier for you to think in terms of narrative enquiry (yes) narrative interview (yeah, yeah) that your interviews are part of an enquiry, that in some ways you are trying to clarify something for yourself. (Yeah) And I'd be interested in hearing...what that is and what you're finding out about it.
168	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. Would you like me to...
169	David:	You don't need to but...
170	Sarah:	No, it's good, and I want to, you know, be able to put in as much so that you're going to get more out of things. I suppose, like you would know some of this already, but what brought me to this point was doing 2 years of Adult Guidance, having to look at my own narrative, and really looking at it (laugh), and kind of realising that...my occupation was only reflecting certain parts of me and parts that had been rewarded when younger and that's kind of where I'd ended up. And kind of always not being settled or not being quite content and knowing there was more, but maybe looking for the more outside the job as such. And after doing the Adult Guidance, I kind of realised, if you just trust, and kind of just put it out there, create situations for yourself and in that learning you will kind of arrive (yeah) at a job that expresses...all of you or enough of you to be satisfied. So that's where that kind of brought me to. And I decided I would leave the job. And I suppose music was, was where I was being called to. But I think that that might have been the shiny thing to make me leave (yeah) as opposed to being the real thing.
171	Sarah:	And I hurt my back in the middle of all of that. And although that was bad, it was something bad that happened, I didn't see it as a big deal. But I used it as an excuse to leave work. (Yeah) I was in a good Job and then having a back problem was an easy way of telling them I didn't want to be there anymore. So I did that, and then the body <i>completely</i> feel apart. I worked for 3 hours per week from September to December and those 3 hours killed me. And I just did it to keep the finger in. I was in <i>awful</i> pain. I couldn't believe that this injury that I hadn't paid any attention to was suddenly all-consuming. And I, very quickly realised, that I had just pushed my body for <i>so</i> long, that now when I'd finally given myself the opportunity to be, I was going to get everything I hadn't been or hadn't felt for the few years beforehand. So, so there was huge learning in that.

172	Sarah:	And like, at the time, at that time in September, I was going to do my thesis, when I was lucky enough to get the masters on following your dream (yeah) and using music in my experience and narrative and the experience of other people that I could see that wanted something and were blocking themselves like. And I thought this...it <i>would</i> be brilliant to do that. But the back got in the way. I couldn't hold a guitar, let alone go to a gig. And I had to change. And, I knew I had to find things to help me connect to my body and I didn't know how to do that. And I knew that this was why I was in this state.
173	Sarah:	So, I looked around and I found journaling and mindfulness and I started to experiment with them. I just chose those 2, partly because...physically they didn't demand anything of me. And at that point (that's all you had) that's all I had, yeah. I also found I found it extremely difficult when I <i>was</i> in pain, to do it. And yet, a lot of what I was reading about was those things are used for pain-management and stuff, that's why I was attracted to them. But I found it extremely, extremely difficult to engage in anything, when I was in pain. But it started to lift.
174	Sarah:	And the answers I found to the pain were very alternative. I tried the medical stuff. They fucked me up (laugh). And I was using acupuncture and more kind of healing stuff and that was working and I also knew that I hadn't had an injury, that this stuff wasn't being caused by (yeah) having an accident. And then as I started to get better then the writing started to happen and I wrote one or two songs about wanting to be out of this space (yeah). And then the mindfulness. And I had tried the mindfulness...on my own. I wouldn't get 20 seconds (laugh) out of it. So, I joined a course. I did an, just finished an 8 week course and...where I found it much easier to do it in group because I'll do what I'm told if I'm in group and I'm being supervised. And by week 2 I was in counselling. I hated it. (Yeah) Huge resistance, couldn't understand why I was doing this to myself. I was caught in the 'is this good or am I just punishing myself?', like, you know, (laugh) 'what am I doing?' And I wasn't getting any immediate response to the mindful practices but the next day I'd feel like crap (laugh), you know. And through the counselling, and I went to see a body healer as well, and I could, I could physically feel her hands shake on me, like I knew there was huge releasing. I was connecting it then. But it took....halfway through the mindfulness course to actually go 'yeah, no, this is actually the mindfulness at work.' (Yeah) And that ended for me, you know, kind of, a week and a half ago with a full day of mindfulness, and I've been sick ever since (laugh), you know. But I completely...see the connection now and I'm quite happy to sit in the, the depression at times and the physical illness. So I've kind of gone, But that's kind of my story with it so far.
175	Sarah:	And then the journaling I've just use to record. But I do find great resistance. But I think the resistance is all part of the story, and really important for me to experience it if I ever want to....I think even in the thesis for a reader, if it was simple, (yeah) it just would be true, for people who haven't engaged in this stuff. So yeah, so I suppose this whole thesis is a self-discovery. And then it's trying to check in with other people and kind of see...does this happen for other people, how do you use these practices and maybe down the line because I see you, you know when you're talking about your practices, and they're positive and they're daily and you <i>want</i> to do them. Whereas now, right now it's quite painful but I know that that's because I haven't done, I haven't connected for years.

176	Sarah:	And I'm going back and I'm dealing with...like my mother's pregnancy, do you know like going <i>right</i> back. And all of that stuff is coming up, which I think is amazing, amazingly powerful. And, you know, by going through the shits, I will never assume that it'll be easy for anybody else or I'll never push anybody to do it and things like that. So I think it's really good but it's great to hear the end stories as well (laugh). And you get to a point where it's...it's used for reflexive purposes and to stay in touch and it doesn't necessarily equal pain anymore. (Yeah) There you go (laugh).
177	David:	So, in some ways, it's kind of a new area of your life (yeah) and you're starting to, to use it to ground you, but also to, to, you're kind of saying that there's, there's connection between your story and your body and what you're experiencing in your body, and particularly the pain that you're experiencing in your body and that you're...of course when you stop, what do you feel? You feel your pain. It's easy to distract from it (yeah) but that you've decided, for whatever reason, not to do that anymore.
178	Sarah:	Well I feel I got to tell my story in the 2 years that I was here, on a cognitive level and on a heart level. But it, it left me wanting more and it left me creating space where I'd go off and find this new career, but actually, the space just created me to go to, what I would describe as a spiritual level, you know, because I often thought that I was head and I wasn't connecting with heart. But I realise now that I was confusing that, like I <i>was</i> head and heart, I wasn't....the thing I was missing, I wasn't even acknowledging existed, which was spirit. And that's what this year now is. Yeah, yeah. (Very good) But it makes sense to me when you talk about that presence in the room. Like I kind of know, the whole world is going to feel so different when I come out at the end of this because I have been present to people and to my whole life with head and heart, what's it going to be like when there's this other dimension there, you know, and that can only be good for everybody else as well, (yeah) you know (laugh). So it's exciting.
179	David:	That's good. But a tough time (Yeah, yeah)
180	Sarah:	But one of those tough times that you kind of, you know the pain is a good pain, you know (yeah)..it's okay, for now (laugh), it's bearable (laugh).
181	David:	Well there is a book called 'The Wounded Researcher', (yeah) so you're aware of that are you?
182	Sarah:	I picked that up. Yeah, yeah.
183	David:	Well I think that's an important book because in a way, it gives you permission to, to...to realise actually that....there're two things. One is there's you with all your projects to try and, you know, forge ahead. And then he also said that the project has something it's asking you. And you are, you're not in control of that so that, it's going to express itself through you in some way. And, writing through that is ...you know
184	David:	It's like sometimes when you, when you are, when I'm doing my mindfulness practice...the knots in the wood on the floor will take on a pattern. They're never, I mean I go about my daily life and they're not obvious to me and then yet suddenly

		there's this pattern and if I allow that to be, then, you know, patterns happen. I'm shaping them of course, but they happen. But I have, there's a real thing lying between making it happen and pressurising it to happen and allowing it to happen and I think he's good on that. And the other person I think who's good on that is Margaret Suderlan? She has a couple of papers around post-modern emergence. And again I like what she says, (yeah) I think she's good.
185	Sarah:	And 'The Wounded Researcher', you know, after you had mentioned it...(did I?) You had, you'd mentioned it in class and I went over and looked for it and ended up ordering it, kind of, you know....picked up 'Gees, no, this is something I have to have at home' (laugh). And I only really read the first page or two and then I had to put it down and kind of say 'this isn't for now', because it was...it could be all-consuming if I was to actually go off on it, do you know (sure, yeah) it's another journey nearly. (Yeah, yeah) But I read the first page and I was amazed and I was scared, because it was putting in, 'academic' now mightn't be the right word, but you know, quite academic terms and knowledgeable terms, stories that I associated with spirituality that I didn't quite believe in, and here it was in a textbook. (yeah) And that was shocking for me. And it also really kind of brought to the forefront 'this stuff <i>is</i> real', you know, it isn't imaginary, it does exist and that in itself...(absolutely) was one of those....edges (laugh). (Yeah I think it's about edges) Yeah. So I have that book waiting at home now for next year when the thesis is over I can...delve into it. Yeah, yeah.
186	David:	Well thanks for sharing that story with me.
187	Sarah:	Thank you.
188	David:	So you're off now to sit for a couple of days.
189	Sarah:	Yeah, although this is, it's, it's part of the 'Learning for Wellbeing' and it's a deepening seminar is what they're calling it, so I think it will be quite active. (Oh good) Yeah, which is nice as well. Especially after the mindfulness stuff where it is silent and introverted.
190	David:	Learning for Wellbeing? (Yeah) and it's the Universal...?
191	Sarah:	UEF - Universal Education Foundation, yeah.
192	David:	That's great. Well, I hope that goes well.
193	Sarah:	A bit of craic if nothing else (laugh).
194	David:	But it's all part of the inquiry. (Yeah, yeah) I mean I think that that's the thing...I think sometimes it's, it's easier not to use the word research and use the word inquiry instead and what you're engaged in is an inquiry about mindfulness and wellbeing and journaling. You're doing your research next week, do you know, or whenever you're going (this week), this week yeah. So that's, it's a very pleasant part of the research.
195	Sarah:	Yeah, it's great (laugh). Well the whole thing has been great, because it's all meaningful, very meaningful.

197	David:	And you've done 3 interviews, how many more have you to go?
198	Sarah:	I was glad, I had put off asking people, because it kept changing shape. And I was going to ask, a kind of a guy who is kind of high up in Buddhism in Ireland and I'm now not going to do that because it hasn't taken on that kind of religious....slant. (Yeah) So, so I think there'll be two more and the people I'm drawn to now is....one of the women who is facilitating on this French retreat. I just have a feeling she's going to be one of them. (Yeah, yeah) And it's just a feeling, I haven't said anything to her, I think she's going to be one. And then, just literally yesterday, I was in, in an organisation at home, and, where they work with people in, in early recovery, but they use a lot of meditation and they use a lot of journaling and I think I'm actually going to interview one of those staff, whose been through it themselves, come out the other end and is now back working to kind of show its use there. But that has changed from what it was. Before it was like 'going to interview doctors' (sure, sure) and it's moved, yeah. Big time moved.
199	David:	Well it has its own ideas
200	Sarah:	So thank you very much.
201	David:	It's a pleasure, absolute pleasure.
202	Sarah:	It's great.

TRANSCRIPT 4: INTERVIEW WITH LUIS – 29.3.11

This interview took place from 5pm to 6pm and then from 10pm to 11.15pm on Wednesday 29th March in a French monastery after myself, Luis and 23 other participants and 2 facilitators had been together for 5 days engaging in an experiential deepening seminar around 'Learning for well-being'.

1	Sarah:	(What you call yourself – occupation – re. Consent form)
2	Luis:	...you could call it also a facilitator, or mediator, or whatever so that's the training aspect but for me. I put also educator because I'm also involved in the conception of what then is put in practice in the training context. So I could for instance be involved in the conception of what happened in the context of this training but not necessarily be then delivering it, you know, so, or I could be a resource person or involved in the creation of the whole program which would be used by several trainers. So that's why then I re-thought about what I wrote and I put 'educator' to give that larger sense of what I do. And then I, as I explained before, I mixed that with the role of being Communications Manager.
3	Sarah:	And is it ok to put in 'European' or is it 'international'?
4	Luis:	Yeah, most of the time. Well, I started in Portugal and I did that for a few years especially with young people, with youth, and then I, once I left Portugal, and even while I was there for awhile I was more focusing on European and International training.
5	Sarah:	So European and International
6	Luis:	Yeah, because there were contexts were I was living with people coming from Madrid? and African countries who were Russian speaking, so even not European Union and a few times also Latin American and American.
7	Sarah:	I'm very impressed (laugh)
8	Luis:	No, it was just a co-incidence.
9	Sarah:	Great. You're ok if I have this open? (Referring to note pad) We both take notes.
10	Luis:	The whole thing is about journaling so
11	Sarah:	Yeah (Laugh)...and any questions about any of this? (Referring to consent form and info sheet) All made sense?
12	Luis:	No, everything was clear.
13	Luis:	Just one about the topics, I guess you can explain me a bit more about Mindfulness and Mindful Practices? Because I may also integrate them in how I do this work but not be necessarily calling it that way so (yeah) we have to explain me a bit more.

14	Sarah:	Well I suppose my meaning of Mindfulness and Mindful Practices is Mindfulness is having an awareness and in particular an awareness of the present moment and just trying to be present and aware. And Mindful Practices are practices we engaged with in order to help us be Mindful.
15	Luis:	Ok. So, and definitely if you give that explanation there are several practices I would put in that but I think that the first time I actually thought about it using that particular word was when I read this book called, that was very popular, called the 'Power of Now'. (yeah) Yeah. So when I read that book was the first time that I was actually thinking about Mindfulness exactly in the context that you are doing. But I think that there may be other moments I've been at least concerned with using some sort of reflection that would lead me to awareness about each moment of my practice and who I am (mmm) as a practitioner if you can quite like that.
16	Sarah:	I think a lot of people use different methods to remain present but wouldn't be using the term Mindfulness (yeah, exactly). So for you where did Mindfulness and the practices associated with it begin? Where did that all start?
17	Luis	It's funny because right now I'd be worried about the training group (referring to group we were part of) just because they were struggling with the technical material, you know the technical aspect. Gary said 'What was the first thing you learnt as a trainer?' And what he said is 'Know your material'. And, but for me I actually...I think it was the first time I was doing European training and it was in Strasberg in the European Youth Centre so they have a big centre where, that serves exactly the purpose of conducting meetings or seminars, mainly focused on young people. And the organisation I was a volunteer for at the time was delivering training there and that was my first European training.
18	Luis:	And we had a training session, a session within the seminar, it was a group of trainers and I was responsible for that one. And one of the things that I was doing, or that I learnt, I started with things that were very technical, but the training co-ordinator he also had a very coachee, yeah or guided attitude towards all of us and in particular me, was when you are holding the paper and your nervous everybody will notice it. (laugh) So one move, it's just a tip but it's very practical if your nervous don't, just leave your paper on the table and look at that.
19	Luis:	But what I wanted to tell you actually, is there is a moment that I still remember that really shifts the difference in terms of how I felt in that role and what I was capable to deliver was that I was supposed to tell a story because I was very much into metaphors and using story-telling in the context of a tool for training. I was trying to tell some story, I don't even remember what the story was but it was connected to the work and I hold the paper and I felt so out of control of what was happening. You know like I was not, I didn't own what was happening and I was trying to read that story and I felt completely disconnected from everyone that was sitting around.
20	Luis:	And then there was a moment when it was real simple, I was like 20 or something like that and then there was a part when I was sitting around and I was holding the paper and telling the story and I just felt that the structure was not, you know the setting, there was something wrong, something was not connecting. So I just did this gesture by putting myself like this on the chair (feet on the chairs, knees bent,

		back straight and hand on front of chest) which is a bit awkward you know for...now I'd say there is nothing wrong I've have done much worse things as a trainer. But just this gesture of putting myself in that particular position and changing how my body was completely brought an awareness of myself or a sense of balance for finding your center, which was also reflected physically. So, from that moment I could actually come down and read my story and actually have an impact on everyone that was there and I felt much more connected.
21	Luis:	So that small physical change allowed me to feel the difference between when your unbalanced and trying to do something and then when you're centered and trying to do something and that was I think the most, the first valuable lesson that I had, which allowed me also to be myself when I'm training or facilitating which is a very important rule because everybody is trying to be something or follow a module or try to do like they saw. But in the end you really have to find your way of doing things, whatever that is. Yeah, so that was the beginning of the, that was the first change or reflection about being Mindful, if you want to call it that way, and then I added on that as I went along.
21	Sarah:	And you went from a standing position to that kind of foetal pose (yeah, yeah) and that felt more balanced?
22	Luis:	I, I don't know, there was something about the position of, yeah, it was foetal but I felt more protected, more... You know like if you have a stomach ache or something like that, you don't stand like that, you know, when you are comfortable, only when you are completely comfortable you feel like that. But if you have some sort of pain or something disturbing you, you kind of contract, you know. You, you make a shell for yourself. So making your shell like that and maybe focusing on that story, although it could seem awkward, from a mixing point of view, it gave me something that then allowed me to give back, you know. (Yeah) Then I was not focusing only on defending myself and that that was turned at me. I was more close to who I was and I was doing my job, you know.
23	Sarah:	Yeah. So when you say more close to who you were, so who you are may be, it was like you were protecting your essence (Yeah) and getting in (Yeah) closer to it at the same time.
24	Luis:	Yeah. Trying to find something that is, that belongs only to me (Yeah) and then use that to give the text, in that case, to others. (Yeah, yeah) That's how I felt it or how I remember.
25	Sarah:	And just what that would say to me is that, you know if you were to, be given a class on how to present well, it would be stand up straight, you will give more power to your voice (Yeah) and look out (Yeah) and all that kind of stuff and that being mindful and minding yourself, what works with one person would be the other person's worst nightmare. (Laugh)
26	Luis:	Yes, exactly. And I was trying to do that because I knew all of those (rules) rules you know, so I don't hold the papers, stand straight, use colour, black colour and blue colour on the flipchart and don't stand behind the flipchart and use examples, you know, all of these things that you can use but, and they are helpful and then you can integrate them. But they are just, they are almost theatrical in a way, you

		know. They are not connected to yourself. So after that many, many times I broke the rules of the golden book of facilitation.
27	Luis:	But I also feel that this is also a perspective in training. When I am training, although there is a side which is a bit performative, you know, and you get the same kind of feeling and attitudes that when you are performing, or I could feel that way. But there is also a relationship between people that have different rules or different expectations but in terms of value they are all the same. So there's, I'm not going to pretend that that relationship is not happening, you know. I may filter it or use it consciously for pedagogical purpose, so I can do that. But it's also relationship and then you have...honouring that is also, in a way respecting others as equals in value. Do you know what I mean?
28	Sarah:	Yeah I do.
29	Luis:	So I had to, for a while, destroy or abandon all those performative techniques and focus on finding my balance or my centre before I can then again reintegrate those techniques.
30	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah.
31	Luis:	So that's how it felt for me. And, yeah, and that really acting skill today I am, a lot of people would maybe criticise the fact that I am transparent about my feelings or about my expectations or how, my emotional response to the group. And I have felt that, and actually if you can compare it with what happened here, there is a desire for that. There was a request from the group saying to the facilitators, I liked that moment when we were talking about your chickens. And I would like to have more of that, you know. So there is a desire for personal connection from the group, in order to fully trust those people because, frankly, when you come and you have a programme set and you say 'Okay, so we're all going to stand up and we're going to form a circle', you know. And you go and try that in the middle of the street, and nobody's going to pay attention to you, they are going to say 'she's crazy'. So there's a huge amount of trust that these people are putting in you as a facilitator. So, and that trust is gained by building a relationship and everything else should start from there and the way I build the relationship is by being honest within myself and then to others. (Yeah) So that's why I start from there or why I decided for myself that I would start from there.
32	Sarah:	And that, for you, is being mindful.
33	Luis:	Yeah, and that for me is, is, yeah, part of being mindful, yeah.
34	Sarah:	Part of?
35	Luis:	Yeah because, okay so you can put it all in mindfulness but then there are different, there are different levels of awareness. And now I was more talking about assuming my frailty in front of the group or my witnesses. But then there is also about....body, which is also very important. I pay a lot of attention, for instance, I do, and I notice all the time. Did you notice that although it was a circle, the facilitator, when there was a facilitator, there was always (yeah) like a bit of space between, you know....

36	Sarah:	It wasn't a full circle.
37	Luis:	...which kind of, through the space you're kind of telling who that person, where the attention should be focused. So I pay attention to those details because there's a lot of ways you set territories and you give a lot of information just by how you display things and how, where you fit and how you....it's still imperfect. I never got to the point where....'cause I am very performative as a facilitator at the same time, but it's honest, you know. And because of that the down side is that, I never really felt I was in a group where it didn't matter if I was there or not, at a certain stage. (Yeah) There's always certain dependence or certain power associated to the facilitator and I'm very aware of that. So I never got to that point. But that would be the ideal for me, that it would be honest. You know, if the group feel that they don't even remember the facilitator, then that would be perfect, (yes) but I just don't have that kind of personality. I'm always very present with people
38	Sarah:	Well you would be memorable as a participant. Like that that's who you are, (yeah, exactly) as opposed to having to stand out as the facilitator.
39	Luis:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, to, on that order, also because I've done a lot of work in, about diversity and anti-discrimination and so on, another aspect of awareness is exactly, power relation. (Yeah) So being aware of who you are socially, how others will perceive you and what that implies in terms of power. So, starting with the role of facilitator but then also who you are, being a man, being white, being a certain age, functioning in a certain way. So, all that, I am kind of imposing or imprinting or, yeah imprinting in that group setting. And you need to be, I think, you need to be aware of that, so that you can make conscious choices that balance it (yeah) and create more equal relationships, knowing that, of course it will never be equal because you are in a special role.
40	Sarah:	And my belief would be that there's no such thing as 2 equal people (yeah), in the sense that because of inner diversity (yeah), differences mean you can't be equal, but that's (of course) and it's okay (laugh).
41	Luis:	Of course. And also another thing, for instance, if the facilitator is also supposed to be neutral. (Yeah) And in the beginning I tried that and then I abandoned that. Because I am very judgemental. It's, I, it's always functioning that way. And I try, so, I try to be....the only neutrality I can get is by accepting that I am judgemental (yeah), accepting the judgement and then let it go. You know what I mean? So I accept that I am judgemental, I cannot prevent the judgement. And it arrives, I recognise it as part of a pattern or the way I function, and then I try to put it aside and I continue with my work. But I never pretend to be neutral, I never pretend to have an opinion. And there were even moments, sometimes I made a mistake of doing that. And other times it was possible where I let that judgement pass, you know. Because you allow everybody else's judgements to pass (yeah) and then there's sometimes a moment where there's a request for that and there were moments where I made the choice to, to let the judgement pass or communicate that. And that had an impact on the group which was really positive for some but negative for others. But, but I did a lot of mistakes during all this time of course.
42	Sarah:	All awareness. (Yeah) Yeah.

43	Luis:	So yeah, so that's another kind of awareness also, of what your values are (yeah) and what kind of judgements you make upon others or you tend to make at least.
44	Sarah:	And does being mindful, in the sense of, you know, what you are doing and how you are communicating and your environment, and then there's another aspect to mindfulness or in English countries that are into, kind of, alternative approaches, for want of a better word, which is about how, mindfulness can be about how to stay in the present moment. So not necessarily the external bit but the being present, as in not being in the future (yeah) and not being in the past and being a whole body experience. Do those activities that you've described fit in to that as well. Would they, do they help to keep you in the moment?
45	Luis:	Yes. (Yeah, yeah) Especially that whole, the physical aspect I guess. Because I remember, also something...I remember, and this also might sound silly but you know, I'm always, I'm listening and I'm very present, but there would be moments where I would be listening to people, listening to what they're saying in the group, but I wasn't really listening to their words or the meaning of their words, but kind of perceiving what is behind. (Yeah) Which was more, you're there, in front of that circle of people and you are listening to them talking, but in fact you're just capturing information that is happening, you know there is kind of like this flow of information that everybody is giving you at the same time. And there would be moments where I would be so aware of that, you know. And, and it was not about what the person was saying. Then I could, you know, I was there and I could relate, but there was also this receiving from everyone at the same time. (Yeah, yeah) 'Cause you're talking and your intention is that people and facilitators, but then you also have people who are looking like this, they are writing, people down with their faces, people that are not looking there or there is all this information that is going on that you keep collecting at each moment, you know. (Yeah) sometimes it was a bit too much, you know. (Over stimulation)
46	Luis:	Yeah, yeah. And I think that's also one of the reasons why I, why I had to stop doing that so frequently, you know, to... Because there was a moment where I really went on a downward spiral and I just felt I couldn't do this anymore. I couldn't continue being so exposed to that, to groups of people so frequently. I had to kind of compromise. With something else, where less in front of people. It would be because of that constant, constant awareness of each present moment and all the information that you are collecting. Then of course I guess the ideal would be that you collect information and it goes through you and you integrate it and you give back, there's this exchange. But of course, at that, in that particular moment, either I was doing it too much or I didn't know how to manage that (yeah, yeah) information. And it was making me exhausted, completely exhausted.
47	Sarah:	What process did you use to get to the point from that experience to being able to make the decision rather than, you know, changing your behaviour or whatever, that, which I'm sure you would have done. But you know, making the decision 'yeah, I need to leave this for a while.'
48	Luis:	Yeah. I don't know, it was rather, I think it was rather intuitive. Well there was a...okay, there was a moment.....there was something that was, because of this judgemental nature that I'm telling you, which I am, when I'm in balance, I was able to manage it and then understand it as the way I function. When I off balance and I

		<p>was overloaded, then the judgement would be very heavy, you know, and very destructive, (yeah) inside myself and towards the people I was working with. (Yeah) And I was no longer able to be compassionate towards people, I was becoming cynical, you know. And everything was much more demonstrative and that relationship that I was telling you was not really existing. So much that I, you know, I wouldn't remember people I would meet in the context of the training or... And when I got to that poisoned (yeah) state of mind, I decided I have to...I'm not doing my job well and I'm not doing myself well. So I need a pause, I need a pause from this kind of work. So I think, it was when the, yeah, that weight of judgement and this acid attitude was, caused the situation that made me feel that way, 'I can't do this anymore'.</p>
49	Sarah:	<p>And the judgements got too heavy and the relationship wasn't there, (yeah, yeah) it was time to go. (Yeah, yeah) And how did you return to balance once you'd left?</p>
50	Luis:	<p>This is going to seem funny but, so I quit my job, and for a while I was, I was going on a downward spiral at all levels so I quit my relationship, I quit my job, I changed my house, I, and I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do with my life. (Yeah) It was like a new start. I spent a lot of time....I dropped a lot of opportunities. I was not really engaged, or I would.... There was a few.....where I would even have panic attacks, you know, in the middle of the street. So that I would start screaming....'ahhh, people', but I (yeah) had this, this anxiety here in my chest and everything seemed so complicated, you know, every, and time seemed to last for such enormous....It was so long, everything was taking so much time</p>
51	Luis:	<p>...and that was, that was actually when I read the book 'The Power of Now', so I'm, I was doing a lot of things at that time. I was doing energetic healing. That's when I did my like first level high-ki??. I was practicing yoga, so I was really in search of something, you know. And, and 'The Power of Now', I don't remember a lot of the book specifically, just that concept of trying to, not to focus on the past or the future, just to try to be in the present. And I remember washing dishes and trying to, you know, try to feel every sensation of that while I was washing dishes. And that was what helped me in that moment where I was really broken, to, yeah, to live each moment. Each moment, one step at a time. So I had to break down the, the complexity of one day into small steps. 'Okay so now I'm eating.' 'Now I do the dishes.' 'Now I go upstairs.' 'Now I...' (yeah) and it was step by step that kind of helped me, slowly, regain some, some balance.</p>
52	Luis:	<p>And then another thing that was also interesting, that I didn't expect to learn it there. Like, while I was unemployed I was doing courses, I started having a friend with, that has a company in organising some events and now it's more focused on things connected to communication and then I thought 'Oh I like computers, I'm going to learn how to use all this software and do drawing assisted by computer.' And then from that I felt 'okay so I know how to manipulate the software, but this isn't enough to create', you actually need to develop the creativity aspect, you know, how to come up with the concept, how to, you know.</p>
53	Luis:	<p>So I decided to start a course, which I'm still doing. I'm just finishing my second year. So this was like 2 years ago when I started this and I was in this black hole, which is this course in Graphic Design and Illustration. And the course in Graphic Design and Illustration, had, had half of it was drawing class, so nature drawing or</p>

		live model drawing or things like that. (Yeah) And one of the things that we learned and which is very funny when you start to draw, is that you put a lot of what you know into what you draw, so, for instance, you are drawing the person, if, if I put in front of you, what you see basically is one shape here, one palm and then other one here, you don't see my arm because my hand is in front of you and everything becomes smaller the more far away it is. (Yeah) So, but when you're drawing, because you know that there is an arm and that the arm is long, you actually put it in your drawing, although you are not actually seeing it. It's like children when they are drawing when they are like 6, 7 years old, they are drawing pregnant women, (yeah, yeah) they put the baby inside, they don't see the baby but they know it's there so they put it in, you know they have to put everything they know.
54	Luis:	So in fact you put a lot of what you know into what you are observing, although that information is not in what you are observing and I think that, funny enough, after so much time trying to get that kind of mindfulness, or conscious about what you are observing and what you are projecting, it was actually the drawing class that taught me how to really look at things you know, to be a bit more rid of that judgement that I have all the time, you know. So, I think that, that course really helped me distinguishing what I should just observe, what is there and what I'm putting into the...(yeah)...what information I'm putting into the thing. And I think that in ways that maybe I'm not able to point out that has helped me in other parts of my life as well. Sorry I talk a lot. (That's the point.) So that would, I mean, then I can tell you other things or there was really things that stayed in me, (yeah, yeah) you know. And then from that moment on...
55	Sarah:	Can I just ask...(yeah, yeah) about the drawing? (Yeah) So you learnt these lessons in relation to having to draw. And did the art of drawing or the practice of drawing stay, what were the lessons learnt when you moved on?
56	Luis:	Yeah, of course then. The, once you learn that, I think it's like riding a bike.
57	Sarah:	Yes. So you don't continue to draw.
58	Luis:	No I don't draw the same way, not at all. And that's also what I tell people. I don't really enjoy drawing, (yeah (laugh)) you know. Some people are really like, they are always scribbling or doing something and they find some sort of release or cathartic process in drawing. I don't have that at all, I'm very functional in the sense, I draw to explain an idea or because I need that drawing to do something, I'm not drawing for expression and, okay, I'm not like fantastic but I'm okay with this kind of drawing. But if you see where I started and how I can draw now, also at many other levels it's, it's very, very different. So I always tell people that don't know how to draw, that okay, there is a certain element of talent, but there's really a lot that you can develop just by doing it, you know (yeah, yeah) and being guided also, of course.
59	Sarah:	That's brilliant. It's first time I've heard somebody speak about drawing and having that kind of experience, where it filters in and it educates (yeah) every level of you, you know, it changes your paradigm. (Laugh)
60	Luis:	And the thing is like, all the personal development courses (yeah, yeah) and books

		(yeah) that I was doing, which are telling you exactly that, you know, observation, do not judge, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla. And you make such a big effort to try to be that ideal perfect person that is without judgement and not managing and it's when I stopped trying doing that and I, I'm just focusing on doing something else, that I end up, by coincidence, working exactly that thing that I needed to work all the time. (It's amazing.) Yeah. You need to let go to get what you want in a way. It's very...
61	Sarah:	Yeah, and it kind of supports what you were saying earlier about not having things too structured because feeding the information (yeah) doesn't translate into learning (no) and assimilation of the information, it's the doing.
62	Luis:	Yeah, exactly.
63	Sarah:	And it's trying to do the right doing (laugh) or give as many doing experiences as possible.
64	Luis:	Or not, or just, yeah, or not even that, you know. There are no right and wrong about that. And also noting with the drawing, there are some people that don't know how to draw but the beauty of their, the, it's the beauty of the line they draw is incredible, you know. So there is no precision (yeah) but there's a lot of other things that are equally important, you know. So, I can tell, the things, the way I function, I can tell all the things that have contributed to me getting back balance.
65	Luis:	There were other things that were also contributing to this mindfulness. I also started practicing a form of Buddhism that had a lot to do with mindfulness and being in the present and being honest in the present, which is also another thing. And in this practice there was this chanting that we did and we faced a scripture, a scroll, (yeah) which contains some of the essential elements of that Buddhist practice. And we say this chant constantly, so it's like a mantra while you're doing it. And the principle is that, while you're doing it, you are being, it doesn't matter what you are thinking, you just need to focus on that and be honest with what comes, whatever comes. And I think that practice also taught me a lot about being present (yeah) and being honest (yeah) at the same time. (Yeah) And less judgemental as well.
66	Luis:	Because it's okay, you know, when you're doing your chant and sometimes you're invaded by the thought 'oh what I'm going to do for dinner' (laugh) or, you know, 'I wonder if I'm going to catch the last bus', you know while you're doing the thing. And you think 'oh, what a bad Buddhist I am', you know, of thinking other these things while you're in this holy moment. But no, it's not at all about that. It's about accepting that that's normal, you know, that that's how human beings function and that you are honest to accept it and then you come back to that particular practice. So that was also something that I was doing that was helping me, kind of, regain my centre in a way. (Yeah, yeah) Yeah.
67	Sarah:	Yeah, so you associate that kind of mindfulness and present-ness with being centred.
68	Luis:	Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think so, because, it's, it's being.....when you are centred, you are also more aware of everything in you, you know, more parts of you. And I have

		the impression that when you're in effort, you are focusing on just one part, you know. Or making big effort to think (yeah).....and that happened to me a lot, doing work, I was really disrespectful of my hunger, for instance. I could go on for hours without eating, or without sleeping and that had an impact. But I was so, you know, in my head that I didn't even pay attention to what the body was telling me, you know. (Yeah)
69	Luis:	So I think that when you are centred, you are aware of what your head needs to do, like in better words, but you are also aware that maybe you need to sleep or eat and that needs to be integrated in your whole functioning. So I think that yes there's a correspondence I have with making equivalents between being mindful and being centred.
70	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. And today, 2 years later, (yeah) what practices do you still engage in.
71	Luis:	While I'm training?
72	Sarah:	Just you, in general, yourself, what do you do now to keep yourself centred?
73	Luis:	Well there's one thing that I do, which I use all the time. I realise that I often would also hold my breath, (yeah) for just, because you cannot hold your breath right? (Yeah) Because I was not conscious of it and, this is going to sound a bit ridiculous, but I think it's funny but it's interesting 'cause when you go pee, (laugh) there's this thing, for instance, I would be in the toilet, in public toilet and there would be all these people around me making me feel nervous you know. (Yeah) So I realised that I could not pee because of that and that one of things that was blocking it was that I was slightly holding my breath as well because everything was like contracted. So first I realised that, 'but why are you so nervous, why does this bother you?' or 'why are so prudish?' Because then I have all other values that I think 'yeah...oh this shouldn't matter. So I started by trying to practice, you know, releasing the breath, (laugh) to be able to pee in public toilets. This is what you call 'pee shy'. (Laugh)
74	Luis:	And then I realised that I was holding my breath in many other situations that were intimidating me, you know. Even when I'm in a relationship and we would be having conversation and I would be intimidated by that and I kind of caught myself holding my breath. So I started to apply (yeah) the same, trying to do the same thing. So whenever I start to feel a bit more intimidated or nervous by something I have to remind myself, I don't remember all the time, but to breathe, you know. And it's not obvious how I do that. Sometimes I'm doing it and nobody realises it. It's not like I have to stop and be, you know, in a vertical position to do a whole thing, it's just like there you are, sitting here holding my breath and I just disconnect and then I let this 'hoo-hoo-hoo' (blowing sound), relaxation, and that helps me again being honest (yeah) and being present. So that's one of the things that it's very, and it's very personal. I know a lot of people hold their breath but for me it's very common to do that, so that's one of the things that I do.
75	Sarah:	It just, it sounds – and I could be interpreting it or visualising it wrong – it's like by holding the breath, you literally disconnect the body from the brain. (Yeah) It's like, I'm just, I'm not letting this in. (Yeah) Whatever is going on here, I'm just not letting it in, like. So it makes sense when you say that you didn't connect with your

		body or feel your hunger. You just weren't allowing this part to communicate at all.
76	Luis:	Yeah, yeah. (Yeah) And it's also a way to, you know, if breath is life, (yeah) it's also a way of not being there (yeah, yeah), you know.
77	Sarah:	Yeah. And not allowing certain bits to be there.
78	Luis:	I don't, it's like when you hold your breath it's like time freezes, you know. (Yeah, yeah) When you stop breathing, because breath kind of counts time. It's like your internal clock for time (yeah) and it is counting down, the moment you start breathing (laugh) you know it's a counting down, (a lovely thought) because one day you're going to die. That's how it's going to be. So then, if, when you hold breath, you kind of have an impression that everything stands still, you know. (Yeah) And I think it was a refusal as well, of being, feeling afraid and then not wanting to be there and wanting the situation to just stop or be erased (yeah), so I would stop breath. But so I now try to pay my attention to that. I also did psychotherapy (oh) at certain points.
79	Sarah:	As in engaged in psychotherapy?
80	Luis:	I was a client or a patient.
81	Sarah:	Yes, you didn't study it?
82	Luis:	No, no. I engaged in psychotherapy. And I remember doing this exercise, which was..., well it was about. I know it was about, basically that the therapist was, would come close to me, looking me close in the eyes and then go away, go away facing me and then come close, and then go away. (yeah) Just that, but of course in that setting, which was very connected to childhood, because the way the room was displayed and the relationship that was established. In the end, she asked me, 'Luis are you okay?' (laugh) and I said 'Yes, I'm fine.' And then she grabs my hands, and my hands were completely cold and sweaty, you know, like as you do when you are nervous. And she said 'Luis, this is not okay.' (Laugh) 'This is not being okay.' (Yeah) And I think that was the first time I realised how disconnected I could be from what my body is telling me. That was before, then everything else was a build up into more integration between my head and my body.
83	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's amazing. Your story, as different as it is, is mirroring a lot of the things in mine, because the reason I'm doing this is because I had to leave work (yeah) because I stopped caring. (yeah) And that, that scared me, when you kind of didn't want to go to work anymore (yeah) and you just didn't care and you were disconnecting. And my body fell apart (yeah) and I have to start at the beginning and everything that I am interviewing people about are the things that I am experimenting with to try and bring myself back up (yeah) and become centred so I, you've given words to an experience that isn't quite in my past yet, (yeah) so that's been great (yeah) and to see, yes, it works, you know. (Laugh) You can pull it all together and become whole. (Yeah) A better whole than when you were able to give everything to everybody, do you know.
84	Luis:	The thing is, yeah, I don't know, okay, maybe I was giving everything to everybody, but then there was nothing left.

85	Sarah:	Exactly, exactly. So you'll be more whole.
86	Luis:	Exactly. So the idea is I want to be able to give everything to everybody, everything that I can, but respecting (what you need for yourself?) what I need (yeah) to continue, so that it's constantly exchanging. And, and yeah, I think that... There is this book that Daniel has, it's called something like 'Spiral Trauma' or something like that but you really have this idea of a downward spiral and then emerging out of it I guess. Sometimes not everybody (laugh) emerges out of it or not soon, it might take a long time, but I think that there is a way out. But, yes, mindfulness was really, really important and this work that we are doing (yeah) is the most recent interest in the field that is bringing me that is bringing me awareness about myself and my relationship with others and how I function. And I do bring that to everything really. (Yeah) It also allowed me to....yeah, when I, when I....it's not the first time I do this kind of work. (Yeah)
87	Luis:	With the same model, the same framework, I did it when it was called Human Dynamic, you know. I did the Human Dynamics part of it and then it evolved into something else, (yeah) much larger. And when I did it then, it was, it was such a relief to see described how I...ways of functioning that I related to and to also to see that described as another possibility among many others. And from that moment on, I also felt empowered to, this may sound pedantic or arrogant but to demand to have the opportunity to do things that way, you know. (Yeah, yeah) Of course I wouldn't present it as demand but just when you are in the working context, you know, the thing is, you know, 'you're so slow' or 'why are you taking your time?' I would not necessarily demand but I would, maybe I would just make a joke, you know. (Yeah) I used to say 'Well, I am slow', you know something like that. (Yeah) But there was this comfort of feeling that it was okay to be slow (yeah) and even if the other person didn't understand it, I had this self-assurance that it was just another possibility, another way of functioning as many others and that slow or fast...
88	Luis	I actually had that argument with my boyfriend recently because we had only half an hour to go to the movies and I said 'I wonder if we can go and get something to eat before we go to the movies'. And he said 'Well if you walk normally, we will kind of have time to get to the movies.' (Laugh) And you see what that implied, (laugh) like I'm out of the norm, like the word 'normally'. So at first, I mean it was a bit tense, like arguments can be, but it was not like 'ah', we could manage. But the first part of the argument was him realising what that implied by using the word 'normally'. But then I also got pissed off because the second thing is like he was saying 'oh'. Then he was kind of revising what he was saying, not because, as a principle this was not fair, but just because he didn't want me to be upset, you know. And that's even more annoying, you know. 'Cause, 'It's not about me, it's about principles', you know. (Laugh) It's just funny, how this also is very, helps me a lot. (Yeah, yeah) Yeah.
89	Sarah:	And it's that internal knowledge that allows you to accept it as, as you don't have to change (yeah) to suit others, (exactly) you're fine and they're fine.
90	Luis:	Exactly. (Laugh) Whatever. Yeah, I don't need you to understand there are different ways of functioning, that they are all really good, because I knew that for me, (yeah) you know, and then I just need to protect myself or just, yes, guarantee

		that I have the basic necessary to function well in that context and then, yeah, and then whatever. (Yeah) And then if you're interested in that conversation, it's a different thing, but everything else is fine.
91	Sarah:	And did it take long between the theory of it between the theory of it and that actual internal acceptance or did it happen straight away? A kind of, a big moment.
92	Luis:	I mean there was really a release, you know, (yeah) there's some release that happens when you discover, yeah, when you make that discovery, but then there was a period of integration and more discovery, you know, of other things that were not evident to me that was the way I functioned, (yeah) that then got revealed later as you go along and you test with that same awareness that the base was necessary to then (yeah) build everything upon and also to prevent overload 'cause one reason why I had a breakdown was I was just accumulating too many things at the same time. (Yeah) And now I know that that's the way I process information, I accumulate things like a sponge. So now I introduce mechanisms in my daily life which are, 'yeah, I can tell what that is', but now allow me to prevent getting to that point of exhaustion also.
93	Sarah:	So you process as you go along.
94	Luis:	Yeah. And I created strategies to regulate things so I still know that I absorb and when I have the time and the resources, and the right context, then I can, you know, I can just swivel that way of doing things. (Yeah, yeah) But then I have to compromise 'cause I work with other people and I have deadlines. So I cannot be always in this. And also there is a moment where I have to disconnect, you know. So I really integrated strategies to regulate that. And funny enough, for instance, the classes that I do in the evening, although they add activity hours to my daytime, they are actually very good ways to regulate because in my job I say 'whatever happens at 5:30 I have to leave because I have classes at 6'. (Yeah, yeah) And the classes are drawing or coming up with something creative which completely counterbalances what I spend most of my day doing. So that although, what I would say, 'oh but you have such a busy schedule' and 'doesn't that like stresses you out.' No it actually brings a rhythm and structure to my time and I'm not like abandoning this way of functioning which is absorbing everything and being stressed without the things I need to get done, you know. The day, the working day or time of work ends there and then it's another section. (Yeah)
95	Luis:	And then I have another one when I come back from school, which is, which I don't touch computer or work or school, which is you know, I don't have time for a lot of things but it's having a meal and cuddling and going to bed. (Yeah, yeah) So, yeah.
96	Sarah:	That makes complete sense.
97	Luis:	Now I'm really satisfied. I still have the same concern but I just don't take myself so seriously, you know.
98	Sarah:	The same concern?
99	Luis:	I still have the same this overload feeling is all this urgency that 'oh, all the things I need to get done' and 'how will I get the time to do all this?' and 'how am I going to

		be able to do them well?' because there is also some perfectionism associated to that. And I still hold the same imprints, You know. 'cause that's how I function. But now I kind of 'okay, here you go, doing your thing', you know, 'take a break,' 'don't take yourself so seriously.' So I have this internal dialogue which calms me down and kind of puts things in perspective. I'll say 'I'm still worried about that right now, because now we have to go to school, you'll start where you ended tomorrow morning.' So there is more kindness towards myself.
100	Sarah:	It sounds like you don't overly identify with it. You can kind of watch it, separate from it, and accept it...
101	Luis:	Exactly.
102	Sarah:	all at the same time.
103	Luis:	Exactly, I see it coming and sometimes you laugh about it or you can say 'okay, I get the point, I know it's there but now it's time to focus on that.' So, this is one strategy, for instance, strategies how I have in different times, for different focus or with the work time, school time, me-time, personal time or organising it that way.
104	Sarah:	And do you take lunch breaks now?
105	Luis:	Yes, I do take breaks. And I really, you know, but I have to, I need to use techniques to remind myself. Because, since I have this tendency to go into my head and not care, it really helps to discipline myself to 'okay go to another break' or leave the room where I usually work and I sit in the kitchen or I go to the garden because we have an internal garden also. So I will do these kinds of things, I also cook for myself and that's also something that I discovered a lot of pleasure in doing, so I prepare my time, I prepare my lunches. In the beginning it was to save money, you know, because I didn't want to spend so much money over lunch. So the times I spend thinking about what I'm going to prepare to eat and cooking it and so on is actually a way of caring about yourself, you know. Caring what you eat is about caring for this machine that you guide, you know.
106	Sarah:	And do you cook in work or do you do it at home?
107	Luis:	I do it at home, yes. And then bring it. I cook quiche or salads or things like that and then sometimes warm meals that I eat every evening so it's like that. And I also find a lot of pleasure in cooking for others also. You know, you cook a meal and you invite people over. That's also something that I take a lot of pleasure in.
108	Sarah:	And when you were talking about the dishes, now I know that that was a few years ago, would you approach food the same way. You know that kind of attentiveness, when you're cutting and...
109	Luis:	There is just so much more pleasure in sensations that I don't remember having, you know.
110	Sarah:	Yes.
111`	Luis:	So that was really, that really made a difference. But I feel like I had to go there, I

		had to go, like, destroy everything to then rebuild somehow.
112	Sarah:	Yes, break it down.
113	Luis:	Yes.
114	Sarah:	So we had kind of spoken about mindfulness and mindful practices and one of the things you had said, right at the beginning, was storytelling was very important to you.
115	Luis:	Yes, yes.
116	Sarah:	So would storytelling be the same as narrative in your understanding?
117	Luis:	No that's different things. Because when I am storytelling I really had, have, but I do not use it so much anymore, like a collection of stories, which could be short fairy-tales or could be just stories that would in itself contain a metaphor for something that I would like to pass, connected to personal development or values or with an underlying question that would somehow trigger some reflection in who would listen to it. A narrative is something different, that... Sometimes, I actually use it quite a lot because I always refer to a personal experience that I may have had. So narrative for me is something that is connected to my own personal experience, while storytelling, you could see it that way, but for me a story is something that is more detached from me.
118	Sarah:	So story would be fictional but perhaps with meaning, whereas narrative is true.
119	Luis:	Yes, it's like when you are describing something, something that you have experienced from your perspective. So even if I would tell a story that is real, so that it came from someone else, I would still put it in storytelling because it doesn't belong to me. It's not my own perception or my own experience. So that I would make a distinction. And I use both, in different contexts. Although, for instance, I would use narrative, in this case, personal narrative to, for different purposes. I could use it as a way to connect to someone else's experience, so to see, it is an expression of empathy. So I would search in my own personal experience, something that would help me understand what the other person would be going through or what the other person would be trying to express or demonstrate.
120	Sarah:	And is that an internal process? Is it something you do without...
121	Luis:	Yes, I do it all the time, anywhere, any way. Anything that is happening at each moment, I am constantly, me personally, connecting to something that I have experienced. And that is way for one, make sense of things and the other way to make a connection, you know. And maybe you have seen by this conversation that we've been having, I told a lot of episodes of my life, in a way how to demonstrate this or that or that. So if you are in the storytelling mode, or if you are passionate about it, you would also tend to look at your own life in that way. But in this case I make a distinction with things that are fictional and that. I'm not used to make that personal connection. So, for instance, I wouldn't be, if I want to make a connection with something that you are telling me, I wouldn't necessarily use fiction or some metaphor you know, I would probably just look in my file of previous experiences.

		And say 'look at this one', maybe you would find similarities or links.
122	Sarah:	So, on a personal level you use your own self-narratives to understand the experiences of others or to create more empathy. And then in a work situation you use both.
123	Luis:	Yes. I can give you a concrete example. For instance, this is a very specific activity that we use in the context of training with anti-discrimination. We do one particular activity called the identity molecule and the identity molecule has one circle in the centre in which you put your name so it's your identity molecule and then it helps name all the other pieces of the molecule which are your identities, social descriptors or something that defines you or that is part of you. In that case, because we are talking a lot about privilege or power associated with identity or no power or non-privilege, we talk about, you know, being men or being European, or being this or that or being gay or you know. And the way that I would deal with that and how I would demonstrate that activity, at the same time using narrative and also building that relationship that I was telling you about through honesty, is, you tell the story of why those identities are particularly meaningful for you. Because you know, you have like 4 or 5 spaces to write down and you have many, many possible identities, so why would I choose those ones. And then I often associate those descriptors with either an experience of privilege or an experience of discrimination or exclusion. So that would be one way in which I use my own personal experience or even narrative way to work that particular subject, which is identity and privilege.
124	Luis:	Another way that I will also use, also for personal connection, another programme or set of programmes I also work is connected to religious diversity and anti-discrimination. And religious diversity including also non-belief and people that are questioning or agnostic. Or also I do a lot of work with gender and gender discrimination and in those contexts, I think that there is certain power in evoking your own personal experience, which goes in line with what I was saying, that you are not neutral as a facilitator. So I would do that to illustrate something that sometimes it's not clear for people or not visible enough. So that would be another circumstance where I would use my own personal experience. So that some people could related, either by affinity or the other way around, by saying 'oh that's not at all how I have experienced.' So you put at least a reference point, which is your own life and then people either associate or disassociate with that.
125	Luis:	So that's, and because of this thing that I told, I like to be different and I like to do different things all the time. When I talk with someone, because I have all these different experiences, because as if life would be a lab, I think I have enough, or not enough, but I have so many references, that I can make a lot of links with other people. And often people have the impression that I should be much older if I had the chance to live all those things. But, I don't know, it's just the intensity with which I live them and the introspection associated with that that transmits the idea, that then it's just the way I work and how I collect memories in a way.
126	Sarah:	The introspection, you sound like you are quite naturally a very reflective person. Do you find that happens automatically or do you have to engage in practices in order to really engage with your experience and be reflexive?

127	Luis:	I think I could not engage in practices that would stimulate that, because I am naturally introspective. I am also naturally subjective, meaning how does that make me feel? What experiences did I go through that I relate to what I'm living now to what I'm listening from this person. So there is this <i>modus operandi</i> , this way of functioning that is already like that but then maybe also because of that and some sort of a belief that, or even awareness, that there are a lot of parts of me that I am not conscious of and always this will to know more and to increase this awareness, I always chose to participate in experiences that would increase this, not increase but allow me to do this introspection either in a different way, in a different format or with a different point of view. And often with the intent of breaking boundaries because I think that you need settings that allow you to go a little bit further, go a little bit beyond your comfort zone and then you do again, you apply the introspections and you integrate that. So it's a bit of both.
128	Sarah:	Can you give me examples of those kinds of settings that have worked for you?
129	Luis:	Yes, I mean, there are different..., most of them happened in contexts like this seminar where I would, where I function very well that way but then other people may not function at all this way. Because I am always willing to try, so even if I don't agree or if I'm sceptic, I go for it. I try first and I criticise afterwards. So, because I am always willing to expose myself in a way, this context where the setting was provoking some sort of an experiential learning, so something that passed through an action or an experience, and then I can build upon that easily. Do you want specific situations where that happened in my life.
130	Sarah:	Well it seems you're saying that it kind of happens in kind of learning situations or events such as seminars.
131	Luis:	This is one possibility.
132	Sarah:	And is there something that...
133	Luis:	These are the ones that I remember because it was a conscious choice to engage in that, so I also came with this mind-set 'okay this is a time for doing this and breaking boundaries.' So there is also an allowance and an availability for that I wouldn't have in other settings. It can happen you know, it can happen that you go and watch a movie or something in your relationship or a journey, you know, that you travel somewhere. I also had that, I was one month, a bit more than one month in India and there was a huge amount of reflection coming from that. Or a book that brought you something that you didn't consider before, I had that as well. But if you would ask me pivotal moments in my life that I could kind of say 'yes this was a moment, this was a moment'. Let's say that in all the whole collection, most of them, or one of the most significant ones would be, would take place in this particular type of learning, meaning experiential learning.
134	Sarah:	So you kind of, it's event related and then it's also spontaneous events like travelling or a movie or a conversation. And would you have ever kind of engaged in, you know like, weekly supervision or some kind of a structured, scheduled...
135	Luis:	Yes, so I had...So either it would happen, for instance, I did some training, training for educators that is still in the context of a residential seminar, where some

		practice time would be integrated in that particular context and then you would get feedback from the people you work with, people that observe you but still your peers, and also people that would be training you. Then I also had that in a larger period of time, where for instance, with the Council of Europe, I did a long-term training course on Human Rights Education, which was still based on many other things which we are doing here, so still this experiential learning but, in this case, geared towards Human Rights Education, which had, of course, a very cognitive approach on one side, connected to philosophy or learning theory or... But then it also had a very practical side and also a lot of cooperative work. And all this was supervised by members of the training team that accompanied you and that had the particular role of tutoring you during that process and that lasted one year and something.
136	Luis:	And then also within EPTO we have another process called, that we call Peers to Professional because you're training in Peer Training and then when you come with a certain amount of experience or because of age or there is a series of factors, you would like to kind of develop more the professional aspect of your training so, and you're also not so much of a peer to the younger people. So you're a peer to your, the other volunteers in the organisation but kind of going away from doing activities with younger kids from like 16 to 18, 19, 20, you know like. Me now, at 30, I wouldn't be a peer to these target groups. So these people who created a process to support their development as trainers or facilitators or whatever you want to call it, which we call 'Peers to Professional' and that includes 1 year of supervision from people that are seniors or mentors in the structure and that also includes establishing a development plan and then being supervised or tutored in that process. So these are my experiences of being tutored.
137	Luis:	Then it happened that I had mentors in a short-term or a longer-term but these were more spontaneous, you know. I tend to also function in a way that when I see someone that has something I idealise or want to be, I try to learn from that person as much as possible, either by just being close and seeing how that person does things or actually having an opportunity to interact and get more from those people. So, these, but these were, they just appeared in my life for some reason and then I just tried to get as much as I could before they would go away. Yes.
138	Sarah:	And it sounds like these opportunities happen how just presented themselves
139	Luis:	Yes, they're still presenting themselves now. I mean, I think that one of the reasons why I'm here is also because I met all these people. Now it has expanded with this deepening seminar, but in the beginning it was a core group of people that was coming through the Learning for Wellbeing. So Gloria, Linda, Daniel, Jean Anne and there's another person also, called Jean Gordon that's part of their team. And all these people, when I met them, it was a bit like I'm not really sure what this is or where this is going to lead, but these people are amazing and I just want to be around them you know, because there was immediately a certain amount of trust that I was depositing on them because, from the qualities that I could perceive, it can only be something at least interesting, you know. So, they're still presenting itself.
140	Luis:	And for me it is necessary, yes, to always have the stimulation to always have this... this would explain a bit what we, what I told you before, in the context of the

		group, when you said as a joke 'ah, teacher's pet', you know. Because I also always had that and there was one part of me that was connected to wanting to please or wanting to belong or wanting acknowledgement for someone I would either define as superior to me, you know. So the thing you have with parents, you have with teacher and then you have with other people that you acknowledge as superior in some way, in development, in awareness, in power, whatever. So there was a part of me which is, which was that and that would be the typical characteristic for which someone would be called teacher's pet. But there's also another part which is I always had such an eagerness to learn and such a huge curiosity for knowing things, you know. And when you are in the context like this, from whom do you feel that you can get the most, it's probably from either the teacher or the trainer or the facilitator and you also know that it's probably, you're going to, these people are only going to be available for a short amount of time, so you want to get the most out of them. And that eagerness then it's manifested in a lot behaviours that can be confused as some sort of sycophantic behaviour, you know. But I guess there's a little part of that but there's a lot of other reasons for which I like to stay close to people that I feel I can learn something from.
141	Sarah:	And are your peers at this stage?
142	Luis:	No, no, not.
143	Sarah:	As facilitators and...
144	Luis:	Some people, if they are peers or if they become peers?
145	Sarah:	Well if they, I mean take Daniel and Linda, like they're older and they have more experience, but role-wise, they're your peers.
146	Luis:	But you see this is also like, it's also like how do you recognise a peer. We create a framework where we say that peers are young people, for instance from the same culture, you know same cultural background, they share more or less the same references and that is kind of, yes, it is, you can assume that they may be peers. And you can see them as such when you think of them socially, you know. But, recognising someone as your peer, is like in fact something very intuitive. It's, it's sometimes you can't even explain because it is about giving the same value to the person, to the other person or recognising a part of yourself in the other and that's where you see a peer. You can have like 'yes, he's Portuguese like me' or 'he's a guy like me' but you won't necessarily establish that connection, not like that, so the same thing with, not masters, but people you can learn from or that you respect for what they know or what they are or how they inspire you. It's also a very intuitive process. I could kind of define 'yes there's this and that and that and that', but in the end it's something that you just feel. And most of the people that I met, they stayed like that for a long time. And then there may be a circumstance where you also feel that it kind of gets more balanced. But... For instance if you ask these people, you could see like that yes, because of the role they're peers, but I don't see them as peers. I don't behave to them like peers and they definitely, they not behave to me like peers either. So, not at this stage, no.
147	Sarah:	You've done a lot of work around human rights and discrimination and you use your own stories to create connections with people. Do you find that other people

		then use narrative? Are people's stories an important way for them to explore and express.
148	Luis:	I think for some but not for all and for different reasons. For instance, I'm going to be very specific. Take Freddie, for example. She also is very subjective, like she puts things into her own experience and she processes that way. But then there's another side of ourselves which is the value we give to that particular process, yes, and those particular experiences, and also, the importance in the relationship with others. So what I mean is, she may process it this way, she may gather information about herself and her relationship with whatever she is encountering, but in the context of the group, she may decide that that's not relevant or that she doesn't want to put up the group with her shit, as she would say for instance. So this is one example.
149	Sarah:	She holds the story back.
150	Luis:	Yes, exactly, exactly. She doesn't, she would very easily think that sharing something that is personal or her point of view is a burden to other people, unless she really feels intimacy with whoever she's talking. Then you have also other people that, not only they don't see, don't place with the value, but they don't even go that way because what is important to understand is the principle or the value of what is being said and that should be objective, that shouldn't be attached to any personal story. Because when you understand the concept of freedom or the concept of, I don't know, equality, you don't need to, I don't need to illustrate with my own personal story because that will also format the way you look at equality, by how I felt, I was in an equal situation or how I felt an equal.
151	Sarah:	And do you find that in the young people that you work with?
152	Luis:	Yes, yes, of course.
153	Sarah:	That they just learn the concept...and leave themselves out.
154	Luis:	Somehow like that. Now, the thing is... this is what we're talking here with the, in the aspect that people tend to focus like that, now they may do that as a defence, not to explore the emotional side, which is needed to make that connection and you also share it. They may do it because that's their preferred way to learn or engage, so there are all these possibilities but I think one moment or another of your life this introspection and subjectivity are going to be important because you are dealing with people and you need to use that to relate to others. So you may be, you may have a preference or you may have an inclination, but you will need to do that at certain points, I think. So if I apply it to the work context, if I would focus too much on abstract and concepts and principles and values, when it would be requested for me to show a frailty or show something that the people I work with, so the participants would connect. If I wouldn't be able to give something in that regard or at least explain why I function in that way, which is still somehow using an emotional process, I may not be able to connect to at least one part of the participants.
155	Luis:	So one solution to do that is when you work in a team, so for instance, I often try to work with people that are more geared towards values and principles because I am

		not at all. So when you work with a team of facilitators, then you have enough resources in that team that can establish that connection with different types of participants. If you were alone you'd have to make an effort to be more complete and that's where, maybe, that whole mindfulness can help, but it's harder, it's harder to be everything, you know, so, yes. So I think, I think, yes, it's possible to find people that, you know, do not necessarily function that way but that doesn't mean that they don't have it and that doesn't mean that they don't need it, at certain points.
156	Sarah:	And those that do, how does that express itself, is it just the story? You know when people can just talk.
157	Luis:	It depends. I'm sorry, I keep on answering it depends but... So, my experience is especially or mainly with diversity and anti-discrimination. Most of the times when we're talking about this, these personal stories come loaded with a certain emotional charge, which can be negative or positive but there's also a lot of frustration or a lot of...yes, you understand what I mean. So, sometimes, telling these stories in front of a group is a very powerful experience, because I have witnessed many times and I was in that hole myself, and I was a participant evolving in this professional field.
158	Luis:	And when I was a trainer as well, every time, for instance, every time I had to tell a story, with that Identity Molecule, I always included 'gay' as part of the molecule, because that's something that I have in my own personal experience that is one of the important issues when we are talking about anti-discrimination, we're talking about all kinds of discrimination. But I mean just bypassing that would be either denial or a waste, you know. But now, I don't do that, it has been a long time, I don't do that. But that initial moment which happens very soon in the training, it's a coming out moment again and again and again and every time you repeat that activity you're doing a coming out in front of 20 people, 20 young people, you know. And, if one hand you are exposing, there's also a lot of power saying that you belong to a group that is discriminated, in general terms, but yet you are the facilitator leading that activity. So there is this contrast that is, on one hand, provoking people to think and setting an example, demonstrating that you can transform that experience and actually use it in a tool, not only for your own self or information but also to trigger reflection in others, to use it as a pedagogical tool.
159	Luis:	So the same...And that's something we try to facilitate when you get a moment, to a moment where the group has enough synergy and intimacy maybe, that they feel that they can illustrate what we are talking about with their own personal experience, there is also that empowerment moment, you know, that me I'm talking about a moment where I was....where I felt excluded or the other way around, where I feel I excluded someone or where I felt touched by this or that. There is in this sharing a learning for everyone, which is different also from the one that expresses and the other ones that are participating in that. But, so I think that it can be very powerful, it's not just telling your story, you know.
160	Luis:	So, in that particular context of anti-discrimination work, I don't know if it would be, if I would be talking about environment and how I was so shocked to see trees being cut in the, I don't know, in my neighbourhood, I don't know, I don't have enough experience to relate to that story but the power of the testimony is very

161	Luis:	important. And if I may add, there was another project that I was engaged in called Diversity Crew, we called it Diversity Crew after, and it started with the year, the European year against, for equal opportunities, which was in '97, and they launched the directives that were then translated into the National Member States, on anti-discrimination law. So it was, all countries had to create integrated directives by creating laws which protect the people against discrimination on several grounds. Okay so that was inaugurative because it was covering several grounds not just race and gender, which were the previous laws.
162	Luis:	And, associated with that event, I was invited together with a group of other people to tell stories about our lives and how, that topic, those topics were meaningful for us. Now, there is a certain United Colours of Benetton feeling into this because a group of young people, a gay, a Roma, a black, a disabled, a this and that and that, okay. So it was a bit, zoo, alright. But, so we were aware of that and even being aware of that we decided to do it because the opportunity to speak to Ministers and to all those, you know, policy makers was unique and we felt, yes we felt that, we were also honoured by that. Although there was a certain amount of instrumentalisation, but also we trusted the person that invited us because people that work in institutions they are not all the same, they are people that are still idealists and that are, you know, doing things with their heart. So, also what was convinced us was, there was no rule about what we had to say, we knew how much time we had, there was a certain structural context but there was no rule about how we would do it.
163	Luis:	So there was a whole process of actually sharing our stories, our testimonies or life experiences and to select the one story that would illustrate the point that we wanted to make, each of us. And then we actually came up with a way of telling those stories that would be creative and that would somehow take away some of the pressure of the instrumentalisation. So how we did it, was, of course this has a whole, a lot of meaning behind, was, we were sitting together with all the people in the conference, it was at the opening conference and then each of us emerged from the others and we told our stories. So people didn't know that we were doing that thing. Not only we did it from there, we also told stories from other people. So I would tell the story of the Roma woman and the Roma woman would tell the story of the disabled guy and you know, but speaking in 'I', you know, but those were real stories, stories that we all, it was our personal stories. And, I mean, after that, of course, in a boring conference where people make political speeches, it's no wonder that they would retain especially that particular moment.
164	Luis:	But I remember when I was telling, also again, so there were a series of events that we did again in the European Parliament, and there were 2, 3 people that came to me and they worked in the parliament and they came and they said 'I know what you're talking about', you know. Yes, I mean, I don't know what the impact was, we didn't come and assess it, you know, there was no evaluation, but there was something very touching about, you know, seeing these suits, they're all like sitting on their desks and still they came to me and they said 'I know what you're talking about'. So if I kind of touched those people with my own life story, then at least it's worth something.

165	Luis:	And yes, so this was another context in which I also used my personal life story and other did so, that had an impact and it was again, not only telling a story, it was a lot more. And I think that by telling it and every time you tell it, you become a bit more, it gets more and more integrated in you when you dare to take that, sorry just one last point about this, I think that there are people that instrumentalise their own stories. They do this but it's not part of a process, it's just an instrument, like it being some role of victimisation or something like that, so it's not just because I tell the story that it works this way, but it can.
166	Sarah:	Yes, that's great. And I can imagine, you know, all those politicians with like, hundreds of stats about gay people or Roma women or disability and one person telling a story has a much bigger impact.
167	Luis:	Yes. It was a great experience. I remembered....
168	Sarah:	Very empowering
169	Luis:	And if you want you can, you can see it actually. It's on video, so you can see me a few years less and the stories, so you could actually see how that worked out.
170	Sarah:	Yes, and get a sense of it. I'd love to see it.
171	Luis:	Sure, I can send it down to you.
172	Sarah:	That's brilliant. So journaling...you have used it, you wrote stories.
173	Luis:	I wrote stories. I wrote poems. I write whenever I feel very overwhelmed with emotion that I need to put it on paper somehow. And it's kind of funny 'cause you know this breathing that I was telling you, sometimes it just doesn't work, just the breathing and I really need to physically put something out, you know, and, and then I do it and then it comes out better or this relationship between me and the written word helps reorganising things inside or it helps also having the feeling that it's no longer inside me somehow. So, yes, I still use it, much less than I used to, I used to write a lot and a lot and a lot before coming to Brussels.
174	Luis:	And I think that one of the reasons why I don't write so much, it's because no language feels intimate enough to write, you know. When I used to speak Portuguese all the time, it was my mother tongue and I could write very easily in Portuguese. But then I moved to Brussels and I started using English and French and there are basically sometimes there are weeks I don't speak Portuguese. And I started to lose the intimacy of your own mother language. So now there's no language that seems good enough to write, you know, that just flows naturally. So I'm a bit blocked in that sense and it's a bit sad. Yes, so, maybe there will be a moment when there will be one of the languages that will feel okay for me to write. So, doing that, when I write now, it's an effort or sometimes I write when, well, when I want to say 'I love you'. I've done that a few times. I've done a few times also anonymously 'I hate you'. But I didn't give it to the person. But it's an effort because of the language.

175	Sarah:	It's so ironic...that the more languages you have the less relationship you have with language.
176	Luis:	It's a price you pay. But then you also have more languages you can... But I have other ways now, with drawing and so...yes... And I just have to try and find sometimes...I didn't do that process that I was telling you that Artist's Way. I didn't finalise it. And I also think that it gets a bit rusty 'cause that way of writing is also particular. So maybe if I re-engage in that process or if I would do something about it then it would kind of, would be set in motion.
177	Sarah:	Your pattern seems to be quite spontaneous though, rather than...
178	Luis:	The what?
179	Sarah:	Your pattern, like, your learning seems to be quite spontaneous or, or event-driven as opposed to a calculated daily regime of writing for so long.
180	Luis:	I would be bad at that actually and that was the reason why I didn't continue the process because I get bored, not bored in the sense, not in the static Sense but really the routine starts creating some sort of claustrophobia so then I can't do it so it's really like 'ah, I need to write this' or something and then I forget about it. Yes.
181	Sarah:	And when you need to get something out now do you find the drawing can be like a form of journaling, are you capturing?
182	Luis:	No it's very different because although I think that we process things not only through words, I think that a lot of our thoughts are through concepts and through words. So, building the syntax, you know, or playing with the words, the semantic of each word is very different than doing a drawing, which is much larger in possible meaning, you know, it's still very, you get a lot of different sensations with that, or while you're doing it, but the wording is structure, you know, each word is a container of something, you know. So that relationship is very different and it makes you expose things, you have to be much more aware in an explicit way, meaning for instance, after I write, I may possibly talk about it, whereas if I do a drawing, it's just there, I say 'okay, look at this, this is what I feel.' But if I write about it, then I actually create the language to communicate it to someone else in a more specific way.
183	Sarah:	And is that part important? The audience?
184	Luis:	For me, yes. You see that I use a lot of metaphors also to explain things so it's really the written and the spoken word that I find a lot of infinity with, that I enjoy talking a lot, so...
185	Sarah:	And if you were to define what it is that you get from each bit of the process, so from the feeling like you have to get something out, to the activity of writing, to the end product and then the sharing. Do they represent different bits as you go along? Different needs?
186	Luis:	What do you mean do they represent?

187	Sarah:	Like the process itself could be the releasing and the organising and then the end product could be the reflection bit. But then the sharing bit could have completely different meaning.
188	Luis:	Yes. I have mantras but mantras not in the, not like energetic vibration through sound, but mantras like things I tell myself. I have internal conversations. Like the freeze activity that we did, you know, the freeze. I have that, I'm very present, I'm very conscious of that. And often the need to write something is, I am overwhelmed with a certain emotion, for instance, or it doesn't matter or a certain emotion is really present and then I have like a sentence or an idea in words that starts appearing in my head, which can be just, I don't know, it can be anything, you know, sometimes not even logic or sometimes just translating a sensation and it goes like sometimes you have a headache and you go like 'wow, wow, wow' and it feels like that and then and that's the first thing I write. And that's the process, it's like when you wake up with a song in your head, sometimes you just need to listen to the song to get it out of your head. So it's the same thing, so I get this thing and then I write that and then the whole sequence evolves and, as I'm writing, in the beginning, the first things that come out are just an emotional discharge almost, which doesn't need to, it doesn't have to be 'stop it' or something like that, it can be quite serene.
189	Luis:	But the initial is more about this emotional connection and then as I continue it becomes a play with the words and trying to find ways to say things, so it's like a cool down, you know what I mean? So the beginning it's like this need to write and then you become more detached from what you are creating and by the time you actually finish writing you no longer have that initial emotion that drawn me to that writing process. And in the end it can actually be something that is quite structured in logic, but the journey that you went through, while you were writing, it starts from something very hot and then becomes something more mild, you know. Yes, so that's for me how writing channels that process.
190	Sarah:	and can, is the writing like factual about the event that after spurring it off or is it just..
191	Luis:	No, very rarely.
192	Sarah:	Right, so it's normally abstract?
193	Luis:	Yes, it's very rarely descriptive. Very rarely descriptive. Sometimes I write contrasts, you know, yes, or I also write lists. But not lists like groceries lists but I remember making a list of things, of things I need to forgive or, and then how they are phrased, they are not just bullet points, they are a bit more complete, or I remember also using space in how you write. So I remember when I was trying to write things I would like to say to you and things that I would like to say to myself and I have these 2 and I also write things where the 2 meet, you know. That's a lot about relationships in fact, and that also helps me clear things for me. So it has a bit less structure, like blurbs of things, like that, but in the space they have some sort of relationship also. So, that's also a possibility.
194	Sarah:	And then the sharing part at the end, what do you get from that?

195	Luis:	I don't share it always. I may talk about a moment where I was writing and I referred to it to say, I was writing about this and then I felt or then I got this idea or I got this clarity about this or that. Or I may actually show, most of the times if it's a gift or something that potentially can make someone happy... Or I've also chose to show when I was very fragile or in some sort of a turmoil at a certain point where I wrote and I want the other person to understand the state I was when I wrote that and just by reading it, or me reading it to that person, that gives an idea of my internal state, even though it was no longer. So I remember doing it to say 'this is what happened to me' or 'this is how I felt when that happened'. So now I'm able to have a serene conversation but I want, I still, but I'm no longer having that emotional state. So I can simulate for the person to understand. So that particular writing is a registry of that emotional state at that time.
196	Sarah:	And it has to be acknowledged that it did happen
197	Luis:	Exactly, exactly. So, yes, that would be a way I have used in the past.
198	Sarah:	Obviously, all these things you have done and you're constantly, you know, searching and seeking for something that will move you up that ladder and help you evolve and challenge you...and all that. I mean, all of that relates to your own sense of self. Would you see them as things that you do for your own wellbeing or sense of self-care or is it driven by something else?
199	Luis:	Yes, but indirectly, in the sense that, for instance, I use a lot of that to understand, knowing that understanding is essential for me to feel well. So that's one way. So it's, I don't have that connection, 'oh I need to care for myself' therefore I'm on the right... It's like 'oh I need to understand'. But of course so understanding is one of the things that is essential for my balance, for my wellbeing, the same way as expression is important for my wellbeing, but my first need is expression and then, and then it all links together. So, yes, I would agree with you but I don't do it the same way as, for instance....
200	Luis:	Well did that contribute to my wellbeing or not? So it's not like I, it's not the same consciousness that you do for instance, when I try not to check a computer screen sometime before I go to sleep so that I sleep better. Or the same way as I think 'I still didn't do sports this week so I better plan to keep some sort of a routine'. You know, it's not, it's kind of consciousness which is much more sustained. This is a different, it's more of a need that emerges, that I know that contributes to my wellbeing, but it's not with that consciousness that I do it, when I, when I decide to do it.
201	Sarah:	So the wellbeing is more, is one of the results as opposed to the motivation?
202	Luis:	Yeah, exactly.
203	Sarah:	And it sounds like you do have practices then that you actually engage in order to self-care?
204	Luis:	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
205	Sarah:	Which are things like...

206	Luis:	well a lot of things....(yeah) I, what I told you before about how I divide my time to make sure that I don't, I don't work too much and I don't do school work too much and that I have enough time to be with myself or with the ones I love. To not exaggerate with a lot of things, or with what I eat, making sure that I eat good things, to observe my body, I do that quiet a lot, not like a as a hypochondriac, like 'is it a mole or is it cancer?', not in that way, but you know. For instance, when we were doing the, when the candle thing was happening, I was, my belly was aching a lot and I think it's not for, I think that there is a reason why my body is responding that way, so I pay attention to that and I, and I care for that and yeah.... And also emotionally I, I, that came a bit more recent, I try not to expose myself to situations where I know I will be stretched, or where I, I know they are going to be harmful. Not to surround myself with people that drain my energy. Yeah. But it takes time to also understand who are the people that drain my energy or not and how they do that. So, yeah, of course I, I think I have, yeah, I think I've reached a point where I actually care a lot about myself. (Yeah) Yeah.
207	Sarah:	And self-care and wellbeing are they the same thing for you?
208	Luis:	No, I think they're different because I think self-care is something that you can do, you can practice that. And that can lead into a state, which is a state of wellbeing, which is not a static state either, it's... I often use a metaphor for it, these dynamic concepts which is the rattle, no, what do you call this toy that you spin like that. In fact in Portugal we have one that you tie a string and then you throw it on the floor and it spins as long as it has....
209	Sarah:	Toppers.
210	Luis:	Toppers exactly. (Laugh) So it's like, that game that you, you have to keep it spinning so that it stands, or else it falls. And I think that wellbeing is like that also. You have to keep it spinning. And you keep it spinning with self-care and you keep it spinning with this and that....whatever you consider to be essential. (Yeah, yeah, yeah) By allowing you mechanisms to understand situations or to express yourself, that I'm telling in my own case. So self-care is another of those forces that keep wellbeing spinning in that sense. But they are not necessarily the same thing. You can engage in a lot of self-care (yeah) and never feel that you achieve a state of wellbeing.
211	Sarah:	So wellbeing is a state and it's an ever-moving state. (Yeah, yeah.) And self-care is a process or a method.
212	Luis:	Yeah. And I think that, for instance, I have a colleague and I think that's ironic and very frustrating side of it which I don't have an answer and she engages in a lot of practices and ways that, of self-care, I would say. So, yeah, in many, in a variety of ways. And yet I have the impression that she constantly doesn't feel she is in a state of wellbeing, which is also connected to maybe perception, when are you, when is it enough? When do you feel that you are balanced? When, 'cause if you're striving for some sort of perfection, then you'll never feel you achieve a certain state of wellbeing. Because I think that wellbeing is also integrating the aspects of you that are to be understood, or to be integrated, or to be accepted, or to, (yeah, yeah) you know.

213	Luis:	And, yeah, but there are parts of you, you'll always going to have that toenail that is hurting, or cold or....and that's why I struggle a bit. There's this certain idea that the superhuman, you know. Especially with the integration of all that we know from alternative medicine and so on. So there's like this, we all want to be super-beings, (laugh) where we eat healthy, we do healthy activities and we're very conscious of ourselves and our relationship with others. So there's certain, an amount of things to be aware and to, and to control, you know. (And worry (laugh).) It's impossible (yeah) and yeah, so I, I think that part of wellbeing, and of course this is a very delicate and personal balance, is also accepting that there are parts of you that are less well, you know (yeah, yeah, yeah).
214	Sarah:	I often find the 'weller' I am, if I'm in the middle of, you know, taking another step to being well (yeah), the sicker physically I am. That there'll always be a physical release (yeah) and it will look like (yeah) 'are you not looking after yourself', (exactly) when actually it's part of the process.
215	Luis:	it's part of it...evacuating or something, (yeah) yeah. Or also, I saw once, you know tad?, it's online, it's a webpage. It's not only a webpage. It's a conference of people in the United States where they come and just share good ideas about philosophy, art, medicine, it doesn't matter. And they come and they make these inspiring speeches, you should look in to see, they're very nice. And there was one guy who was doing research and it was neurological research about how the brain is hard-wired for people that go through hard experiences in their lives, (yeah) you know, maybe illness or something really traumatic. Not, and this is not like, I'm not talking about children, for instance, and then dramas from that period. Really things that come in adult age. Difficulties, you know. And how they are actually very happy. They feel they are well in life. And maybe they are people like amputees or something like that. (Yeah) Of course the secret for wellbeing is not to cut a leg off but it's just say that it is the contrast with an extreme situation which may be connected to what we were talking before of this dismantling everything before you spiral up. That un-wellness is crucial for you to then feel well.
216	Sarah:	To come out the other side.
217	Luis:	Yeah, exactly. (Yeah) So, if you don't have that experience, in some moments, somehow, you will, it will be very difficult for you to recognise what is wellbeing when you're...even when you are already there, you know (yeah, yeah, yeah).
218	Sarah:	When it's automatic.
219	Luis:	There are no nuances. So, yeah.
130	Sarah:	So I, I kind of know the answer, but occupation, how important is ones occupation, your occupation, to your wellbeing?
131	Luis:	What you mean occupation?
132	Sarah:	What you do?

133	Luis:	For a living? Well, for me, it's very important (yeah). But, I think there, for me it is, there, because of this subjectivity, I have to be personally engaged in what I do professionally. It has to be meaningful for my life, you know. And I think that I am really, really privileged (yeah). I'm....I'm very lucky. But I think it's possible to be, or to find meaning in, you know, being a banker or something that is.... So for me that is essential and it was always what drove me. What drove me was always the opportunity to learn. That was always what, what, what brought me to whatever jobs I wanted to take (yeah) or not take. So, yeah. So for me it's really essential.
134	Sarah:	We're finally coming towards the end (laugh). I'd say I have about 2 and a half hours of tape, I'm so sorry (laugh).
135	Luis:	You don't have to be sorry. I, I have no idea, you have to go through all this, it's just going to be more difficult to select whatever you want to delete...
136	Sarah:	So this was, I suppose, my attempt at a narrative interview (yeah) and part of my thesis is to experiment with narrative research, (yeah) methodology and narrative inquiry, rather than the idea that you go in with your set questions, (yeah) you tick your boxes, you go home and you compare and contrast answers. It's more about the storytelling (yeah) and capturing people's stories and also being really vocal of your own subjectivity when you're writing and not pretending (yeah) that you're not involved in any way in the research. So, so just, this interview: How was it for you? How did you experience it?
137	Luis:	It's interesting because I was thinking about it as, as the interview was going along. So, at the same time, 'specially when we were talking about that particular aspect of writing and the language and not feeling comfortable with the language was somehow raising the awareness of the importance of the written word. So even when I was trying to explain ways to process, you know for me (yeah) or moving from an emotional state and actually writing something, or, and eventually sharing it and also comparing it with drawing, made me realise how, actually I have a very strong affinity with wording. You know, it's just, it feels very natural to me to write or speak, (yeah) for instance. So that was kind of bringing the awareness that, of that importance and that I should probably make the time in there to write in whatever language comes out, I guess. So that, it's interesting.
138	Luis:	I often, also another thing that I was feeling, which I demonstrated is, I always had this concern, but I have it, not just when it's an interview, I have it in other circumstances also groups, I'm always 'am I speaking too much', (laugh) 'Am I just adding more details', 'is this really getting too long' and 'she's going to have a lot of work transcribing all this shit'. So there was also this thing kind of going on in the back of my mind, of this, while I was doing this. And, yeah, and there's also a certain...well, maybe because I also, at least right now, I tend to look at things positively, like add my life experiences as a contribution to what I am now, talking about these episodes of my life, it's as if you'd...oh, what I, actually my ...was about that. It's about going a long way, climbing a mountain and suddenly you turn back and you look at the path that you have gone through (yeah) and this conversation was a bit that for me. (Yeah) It was like, 'oh look at that', 'oh, and that story', 'ah, that story'. So, that, that was, it's pleasant.

139	Sarah:	For me, you were the perfect interviewee, (laugh) because you talk (yeah) and you didn't need prompting (yeah) and it was all storytelling (yeah), which was the beauty of it, because it illustrated why use narrative (laugh). And I knew I wanted to capture your stories, you know. I didn't know I'd meet you coming here and I'd actually brought this stuff thinking I might ask the one of the facilitators but no it was like 'no, Luis is the one, he's the one to ask', you know, so I'm delighted.
140	Luis:	Okay. I'm glad like. (Laugh) Great.
141	Sarah:	And just to end, is there anything you felt wasn't asked.
142	Luis:	That wasn't asked?
143	Sarah:	Yeah, anything, any holes that you would have liked to be asked about like that would be important to say.
144	Luis:	I don't know, I don't think I have enough information for that, in the sense that...
145	Sarah:	More for yourself, your own feeling of that I missed something in your story.
146	Luis:	'oh you're doing a research on this and you didn't ask me that'.....no because I, well I left you to the essentials, I, I kind of knew that you were doing research on journaling and mindfulness and mindful practices, so, I mean... We covered a lot more than that. And then I also felt that there was really a lot of allowness for the conversation to kind of explore it's new branches (yeah) but still keep a track, so I, I don't feel that there is anything missing. (Great) Maybe if I remember something I will....(email me) when you're going to call me to confirm whether (laugh) this is okay, 'oh and I forgot to tell you this story, you got to write this one down'.
147	Sarah:	I tell you if I transcribe this and you pull your consent, you're in trouble. (Laugh)
148	Luis:	Actually, can I get the, are you going to transcribe it?
149	Sarah:	Yeah, so I'll send it to you.
150	Luis:	Ah, it will be perfect.
151	Sarah:	Yeah, so you'll have the whole thing.
152	Luis:	Exactly, so that's just..
153	Sarah:	And you can just turn it into an article. (Laugh)
154	Luis:	Make some wallpaper (laugh). Okay.
155	Sarah:	And if you ever want a copy of the recording....
156	Luis:	No, that's a bit embarrassing.
157	Sarah:	I don't like listening to my own voice either.

158	Luis:	The transcription can be interesting.
159	Sarah:	Yeah. And you'll see stuff yourself.
160	Luis:	Yeah, yeah, exactly.
161	Sarah:	Thank you.

TRANSCRIPT 5: SKYPE INTERVIEW WITH LINDA O'TOOLE – 18.4.11

1	Linda:	Will you be able to see me? I don't think you can, can you?
2	Sarah:	No, no, I just have a question mark instead of your head.
3	Linda:	Oh...(laugh).
4	Sarah:	So I can talk to that.
5	Linda:	I'm here, (laugh) and I can see you, hi...(laugh)
6	Sarah:	Hi, you can see the fuzzy me. I can look at myself while I'm talking to you, which is not a pleasant experience.
7	Linda:	You may want to...yeah, you may not want to do that. You may want to just....yeah, I'm sorry, I mean it's nice to see you but I know what it's like when you're talking to somebody that you are just looking back at yourself. So you may want to hit, like do have you have a little, can you minimize the middle of the screen?
8	Sarah:	Yeah.
9	Linda:	Yeah, why don't you do that, 'cause then it won't be so distracting...yeah, I...
10	Sarah:	Yeah.
11	Linda:	And I may pop up, because my camera has been going in and out but I just haven't had a chance to take it out.
12	Sarah:	Grand. You can let me know if I go out of focus.
13	Linda:	Okay.
14	Sarah:	So I'm now looking at a screensaver of a baby, so that's good, I talk to her and pretend that it's you, which is freaky in itself (laugh).
15	Linda:	Yes (laugh).
16	Sarah:	So how are you?
17	Linda:	Gosh, well I, I...you're my second to the last call that I'm going to have before, I take a couple of days just offline, where...I'm not even going to anybody. I just need to have some time for....re-centring myself. (Yeah) But I thought, I thought 'well, would there be any perfect, what perfect way to start that process than to talk to Sarah (Laugh) on this topic, self-care. So I thought 'yes, yes, let's not reschedule let's just go ahead. (Brilliant) Yeah, I'm really...I'm really at the, kind of, end of a very, very busy time with so many, but, you know, positive but really intense experiences and I just, I'm just brain-dead (laugh). So, that's where I am. How are you?
18	Sarah:	I'm good. I'm good. But I can hear that you're quite wrecked, I mean you've had...you only had a few days between France and your next excursion, so...hard to be that much in demand.

19	Linda:	Yeah. Well I don't know if it's in demand but... Perhaps it's just being silly and booking everything at the same time, I don't know. But, yeah, it's....and some of the experiences have been really...new. And...so, you know, that's...it's just a lot of new information (yeah) that seems to be coming in, so...so, yeah.
20	Sarah:	And they don't end, do they? Like the French (I know/no) ended and you didn't have any more contact. You probably had more contact.
21	Linda:	Yeah (laugh). And then you get to discover all of the things that... 'oh was that what you were thinking?' (Yeah) (laugh) But that's, you know, that's always the some/side of it. I think that the hardest thing about...the experience, harder, well there were a number of things that were hard about the experience of France. But, for me right now, I've always been in twos. Well I, I think that most of my experiences have been in two situations. (Yeah) One is that I know that, that my work with the group is done and I'm not going to be continuing on and somebody else will, you know, and that's kind of sometimes corporate clients or school districts or whatever. (Yes, yeah) Or, I know that I'm going, that this is the beginning of a relationship and I know what the next step is. So this is not, you know, the experience of France is...sort of, somewhere between the two of those. And, so that's...yeah, it's like that, I can't really go to the next step of beginning to create something inside of myself. And...yet still staying open to, you know, whatever might happen, so...yeah. So, so it's that, yeah. So, you wanted to talk about some specifics, I think.
22	Sarah:	Yeah, so I suppose before we officially start the interview as such, you're okay with the consent form?
23	Linda:	Oh, of course. Yes, yes.
24	Sarah:	And you understood what it was saying and...you're happy enough to go with all that.
25	Linda:	Yes, yes.
26	Sarah:	And that is why I wasn't looking for the consent before hand is because with a narrative interview you don't really know what's going to come up until afterwards. (Yeah, right) So you might decide 'well I'm fine with that bit going through and not that bit' and things like that. (Yes) You know (yes) so...that's cool. So, and you got the theme sheet, kind of, what was going to be brought up.
27	Linda:	I did and yeah so I have both of those and I they seem fine and I'm just going to let you guide the process
28	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah and I have paper and pen in front of me, is that okay with you if I take notes if something comes up for me?
29	Linda:	Oh absolutely, I mean I can't imagine that I will say anything that I wouldn't ??? (laugh)
30	Sarah:	...Have all over the Irish media. So, I suppose then, maybe then to begin, just for the tape and for the transcript to kind of just go over our relationship in the sense that I suppose I met you through Learning for Wellbeing movement and you were the facilitator at a French deepening seminar which for me, you know, I have reflected on quite personally in a journal that will be used for the thesis. So, the process that you

		led us through was very much going to be part of...the thesis, you know. (Yeah, great) So it's amazing then to be able to interview you as, as, as somebody who was the facilitator but who also has life experience of engaging in these practices. So that's why I was very keen to try and capture your story around it all
31	Linda:	Great, I'm very excited. Wonderful.
32	Sarah:	So I suppose maybe, to, to start with then, like what is your understanding of, kind of, when you hear the term 'mindfulness' or 'mindful practices'?
33	Linda:	Well I think mindfulness practices...well I mean there's a number of levels to respond to that, I think. One is I think that there is, there is both something essential about mindfulness and...and then...I think it's, you know, something that's essential that is individually experienced by each of us at different points in our lives, so that what I considered mindfulness...even ten years ago isn't what I would experience now. (Yeah) And there's, there's a whole range of practices also that are associated with that.
34	Linda:	So, one of the things that I was talking with Luis about...last week was...the whole notion of drawing and, you know, he was talking about having learned how to draw and it wasn't something that he wanted to do particularly (yeah) but he had to do it in order to get somewhere else. And, part of the process of that was that he...he stuck out his fist which was very effective because we were talking on Skype and my camera was working then so you could see it. But he held out his fist in front of him, so it was very close to the camera. And so I saw this large image that was a fist and then I could see his face but what I couldn't see was his arm. (Yeah) And he was saying that the importance of, in drawing, of, of drawing actually what you see and not what you, what you are knowing must be there, the arm. (Yeah) And, and we began talking about that because, of course, that that, I mean the act of drawing, which I have done, very much as a practice of mindfulness, is, you know, it's a whole field, it's a whole practice of... And people don't talk about drawing particularly as a mindfulness practice but of course it can be. That's like a long, convoluted response to you.
35	Sarah:	No it's a very present action (laugh)
36	Linda:	And did that make sense?
37	Sarah:	Yeah, no, it did. And for you then, now at this time of your life, what does mindfulness mean for you?
38	Linda:	Mindfulness is that, for me, separate from the practices, (yeah) mindfulness is when I know, I have this experience of being fully alive, present to the moment and...aware of myself in that moment, that... So, I'm holding, I'm holding another perspective simultaneously (yeah) and its just still. And it's, it's more an experience than, than a practice.
39	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. And, and when you say that it's changed like over the last ten years, where has it moved from?
40	Linda:	Oh, you know that's always a hard one to do. I'm aware that...let's take a longer span of time than ten years. I'm, I'm aware that I can look back at photographs of myself and that's really, for me, that's one of the triggers, the photographs of myself rather

		<p>than remembering myself in specific situations. So I see the photograph of myself and I can kind of put myself back in that level of awareness and consciousness. (Yeah) And...and I recognise in doing that then, how limited, how much more limited,...the field of which I was aware, that I was conscious of. (Yeah) And so, so it's that, it's that progression of watching that, of being able to trap that through the photographs that I think that it's most... It's a sense of being less...the difference is is that I think that, that I've become more and more aware of, of a larger field of which I am a part. (Yeah) That's the change for me. (Yeah, yeah) Does that make sense?</p>
41	Sarah:	<p>Yeah, no, it does make sense and you're talking...you kind of described it initially as sort of aliveness and connectedness and, you know that was what I was striving for and I was doing this thesis to try and discover that for myself (yeah) and I had glimpses and moments where you might, you know, catch yourself in a moment watching a bird or something and it's only when you were coming out of it that you would realise that you were being completely present. (Yeah) But on the way home from the French retreat, I had my first real blast where I had about 24 hours of just walking around in pure bliss and marvelling at the rain and everything and being completely present. (Yeah) And that was my first time experiencing it, over a longer period of time and without it being a practice, like what you said that it's a state of being as opposed to, you use a practice to try and bring your awareness in so that it will happen automatically but that when it actually comes it's not a conscious thing, (yeah) it's a state of being.</p>
42	Linda:	<p>Yes, yeah.</p>
43	Sarah:	<p>And I have to thank you for that because that, my first real experience was after the French retreat.</p>
44	Linda:	<p>Oh, that's wonderful.</p>
45	Sarah:	<p>Yeah so whatever happened there worked, you know. (Laugh) I don't know why, I don't know how, but it did (laugh).</p>
46	Linda:	<p>Kind of that's always it isn't it, you know, yeah that's part of what I was saying to Luis also 'cause we were, you know he, in some sense he wanted to debrief the experience in France because...he is in a state of like 'well are, are we going to you know try to create a 5 hour session based on, you know, such-and-such' (yeah, yeah) and I'm like 'no', it's like, it's like whatever that experience was it had to be all of that experience you know. We came together from these many different places and everybody had their different perspective on why we were together and...that's kind of a magic, that's like, that's like life...you know (laugh). (Yeah, yeah, yeah) It's was like the, the tough pieces where you know people had to walk up the hill or not have hot water or sit on bird shit (laugh) but 'yeah' I mean not that I would want that, you know, you hope that you can cope with all of that but, but it is that whole kind of experience and so it's, it's not like one thing makes it happen or one person makes it happen. It's like the whole, creates something in which you can.....then you, you know, that you, Sarah, step into a different state of being (yeah, yeah) and that's, that's lovely. Yeah, really lovely.</p>
47	Sarah:	<p>And for you, do you engage then in practices at the moment or have you done in the past, to try and encourage that state of being in yourself?</p>

48	Linda:	<p>Oh, sure, yeah, of course. (Laugh) Oh Sarah, now you're catching me. (Laugh) Because...the biggest practice that I have used is...you know, I'm really, I'm really staying with this trip, to really just find, honestly to this because there are many different...practices that I have used including like...a very primitive form of journaling when I was quite young. Quite young, like maybe 10 or 11, something like that. And...and what I realised in that period of time was that, that I, that I was really being impacted in my dreams and that how I would consider the day, I was being impacted by what had happened most immediately. And, so...right before I would go to bed or something like that. So, so the day could be a really wonderful day and then my brother would say something that would make me angry and I would be angry (yeah) you know, so... So I started practicing this thing that I just came up with myself which was pluses and minuses (laugh) you know. And I would just at the end of every day, I, I had this...I guess it was a notebook of some sort, and I would put, I'd put a line down the middle and I would a plus and a minus at the top and then I would list all of the things that were really pluses for me during that day. And in some sense, you know, looking back on it now I think, well I was, I was building my capacity to be introspective (yeah) to see patterns, I was calming myself, (yeah) I was, I was accessing gratitude (yeah) for the many things that happened. I was forgiving, I was also accessing forgiveness, because there would be things that would be on my minus list that, that would...that I would think 'oh well that wasn't...you know, that person didn't mean it' or 'that wasn't such a big thing'. And, I don't know how long I did that actually. But I know that I did it long enough to get something essential inside of myself. (Yeah)</p>
49	Linda:	<p>And I really think, you know, I journalled over the years, but somewhat sporadically. I've never journalled in a way of going back and looking at my journals but the process of writing or drawing or just even making colours (yeah) has been a journaling process for me, so that, that... But I think it started, you know, with those, those little plus and minus kinds of columns where I taught myself something. And I would have to say that...that those early practices were mostly self-taught, that I didn't have, you know, any other kind of...experience with it actually, you know, so. I just did the best I could with that but it's been a lifelong practice. Then I, you know, I've had a number of people that I consider teachers along the way that I, you know, that I have worked with more specifically and I don't know if there's time to go into it so, so tell me what you heard about that or where you want to perceive what I just talked about or...(18:58)</p>
50	Sarah:	<p>I suppose you've giving me your starting point in the sense that, you know, at 10 or 11 you started, you created a technique for yourself to become more aware of what had happened in your day and create a balance for yourself, which led to feelings of gratitude and forgiveness which is pretty amazing for a 10 or 11 year old to have figured that out for themselves. But sure, no accident when, when you see what you did later on, you know. And then that the journaling had been sporadic and, and probably a bit more, a bit different. Like that, it sounded like the journaling became more of a traditional type of journaling than the kind of pluses and minuses as you got older. Would that be right?</p>
51	Linda:	<p>Yeah well I, I think that it, I think that there were many different...I mean sometimes I would, I can, I can remember times when I just, I would, I would almost do repetitive writing (yeah) in terms of just kind of keep on going over the same thing, over the same thing, over the same thing, just to get it out of me and then I, you know, I would throw it away or delete it. (Yeah) I wouldn't keep it in the sense of reviewing it. I've never been good at reviewing things.</p>

52	Sarah:	And that's very interesting, the fact that it's the process of the journaling as opposed to having a journal at the end (Yes) that's important for you. And what is, what is it in the writing, how does that work for you?
53	Linda:	Well the way I think that it works, for me, is that, I'm not, you know, I've have many, I've have many close relationships in my life or people that have really mattered deeply to me. And...and I, you know, I include those people who are friends or lovers or husbands in the, in, you know, group that I would call teachers that I worked with (yeah) over many years. Those are, those are some of the people that I would consider teachers. But I've also always known that my perspective was...different than, than many others. Even though, yeah I mean there are a few people that I knew loved me so intensely that, that I would have, I mean in a, in a, in an expansive way, I don't mean just you know kind of...in an obsessive way, you know, (yeah) that loving somebody really deeply and accepting all of who they are and still...
54	Linda:	you know, there's, there's people with whom you have a language that it's more similar to, than others. And...but for me the person who has the language that is most similar to me is me. And so I think part of the journaling has been to be able to talk to myself, (yeah) yeah, yeah. So, you know, and somehow the, the, the writing has put it into another drawer but...it's really me communicating to myself and being able to have, have that language spoken back to me. (Yeah) So, I've never really thought about that before. Thank you for asking the question.
55	Sarah:	(Laugh) Thank you for answering it. That's, that's very interesting and it does explain it somewhat as to why journal, you know, why write. (Yes) Especially if it's not for the purpose of actually having a biography or something you can look back on later on.
56	Linda:	Yeah, no, it hasn't been. And, in fact, one of the...one of the pieces that I...long time ago taught myself to type. (Yeah) And I had a...you know, electric typewriter after a while before you know I had a computer. And I loved having the computer because the computer you know, you could just delete (laugh) you know and it was like, yeah it was great. And I can type really fast so if I could talk to myself really quickly without, you know, get out a lot of information very quickly, so...
57	Sarah:	So you would actually type and then delete?
57	Linda:	Oh yeah, oh yeah. When I, when I say that it, and it wasn't even the act of writing like handwriting it, it was the act of communicating it, so I mean if you look....if we ever have much of a correspondence you'll see that I'm very wordy in emails, I'm not, it's really hard for me to...to just say 'great, see you there'. I really, you know, it's like I'm always conveying or communicating something because I consider it sort of like talking to somebody. (Yeah, yeah) And, yeah, yeah.
58	Sarah:	But it, it's funny...when you're saying it even the whole typing and deleting there's a part of me going 'oh God, how can you just let it go', you know. (Laugh) Even if I spend time typing something that I'd have to save it for a little while even if it wasn't going to be used before I could delete it just to show I'd done something (laugh). (Yeah) That's a great gift to be able to just put it out and release away. It's great.
59	Linda:	Well it's, it's just that that's the function of it is, that it's...

60	Sarah:	Letting go, having a conversation with yourself.
61	Linda:	Yeah 'cause it really...???
62	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. So, so you have the journaling and you had that kind of basic journaling when you were younger. What kind of practices would you engage with now?
63	Linda:	Well, honestly what I do is I, I just...well I mean there's been a number of practices along the, along the way. So one of the practices is...one of the practices was staying in a relationship with my first husband. He was a very, very different sort of person. And, we actually...the work that, that we did in France, in terms of the...kind of technique of putting your awareness in different places, you know, and I think you were there for the afternoon session in which we did the participation exercise.
64	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah.
65	Linda:	So, that, that whole body of work comes out of work that we did in a group with a man named Martin and...and Tom, who was my first husband who...died in, well about 23 years ago now, he was in those groups with...we, we joined those groups together, 'joined' them, you know we started attending together, participating in them together. And that had made such an incredible difference in our relationship. He had always been...it's like Tom was always chipped to, it wasn't that he wasn't practical and he was clear but he really was not meant to be in this...life, in this world. He was really chipped to another perspective. (Yeah) And, I don't know if that makes sense to say it that way but you can ask me about it later but (yeah, yeah)...so, for me, you know, one of the...and I met Tom when I was 21.
66	Linda:	And, so it was, it was like, it was encountering somebody who was so different and so alien. That I used to, I used to joke that my function in Tom's life was you know, I would provide the answers to how we do it here on planet earth (laugh). He actually, you know, I mean he was delighted to have somebody in his life who could do that, to do the translation. And I would literally say to him at times 'yeah, I know that that's your perspective on it but actually here (laugh) on planet earth we humans do it this way'. 'Oooh', he would say (laugh). But...and it wasn't just my perception that he was in that, that kind of land with... I think, I think my relationship with him was the biggest practice that I ever had...because, because there was a commitment to stay in relationship with him. And it took me out of, I had to stand at a point where I was translating between, between worlds in one sense, or galaxies even in another sense, dimensionality. And so that, that kind of...standing in between those places and not getting too attached to either one was an incredible practice. (Yeah) Yeah, so...
67	Sarah:	So you were having to keep an awareness...in order to be able to communicate it to him?
68	Linda:	Yeah, yeah and...yeah. And I, I had to stay, you know there's.... People talk about there being, you know as, as though it's somehow separate, the material world and the spiritual world. And, for me, they're absolutely overlapping, you know, it's like...I would say that the spiritual dimension is more expansive and the material is...oh I wish we had, I wish you could see my gesture here. But the material world comes out of the spiritual world and so it becomes this, this point that, you know that we touch in the material world that is our physical bodies and the birds and the trees and so forth. So

		the spiritual dimension is also present in that material. And, and I think that, you know, as human beings that we sometimes forget that we're...more than physical beings, we are spiritual beings and that we're also physical beings but the tipping point is really towards the spiritual beings. And, you know Tom was never, never forgot that. And...and so, for me, to be in relationship with him I had to be standing in that place where I was...in the physical world but also really very conscious of my own capacity as a spiritual being. (Yeah) That was just an incredible training, practice. Yeah.
69	Sarah:	That's amazing.
70	Linda:	And you know, I don't know if I mentioned this but, yeah, I said he died (yeah) yeah. He died and...I am still working on....he had pancreatic cancer....as soon as he figured out a way of getting out, he got out. So he... His prognosis was a year or so and, and he was, he was dead in 6 weeks. So it was very quick but that was kind of how he was but...those 6 weeks were, a most amazing kind of training and practice of staying with what I'm talking about. And, you know, we had, some incredible moments in which I feel...I'm still working with and trying to integrate that into who I am at this moment and what my practices are. I don't know if this is going to help you but this is my experience so, you can...
71	Sarah:	But, you, you know I'm not saying that I necessarily understand exactly what you're saying, but...I know that my relationship with John would have moved me on in my personal development and in my understanding of the world hugely. Do you know and he would certainly be a teacher. But....yeah, so I would understand, you know, that to some degree. How somebody (yeah) could do that for you.
72	Linda:	Yeah and also, I mean, like, like...speaking of John (yeah) because, I mean John is...you know it's like if you go around the circle, that circle that was in France with us, and you...you know, it's like, it's like there is so much depth and... There is so much depth in everyone who was in that circle and then there's the dimension when you can see that...some people are showing more of that depth. You know, so they're, they're expressing more of it. And, and so with John, you can feel that depth with him and you can feel how close to the surface it is, do you know what I mean? (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah) Yeah, yeah. But that wasn't, I mean Tom was a different kind of field... Now Tom, you looked at him and then you could feel how far away he was and while he was right there present you could really, he was somebody you looked at him and you thought... 'where do you come from?' I mean it was just that, he had that quality of, of...being from the stars or something, you know and not this, not even this galaxy. It was that kind of energy. But, but yeah, John, you know it's like that, that, that depth in him is just so close to the surface that, that I could imagine that living with him would keep you in that place of like 'oh yeah, there's so much, (more) there's so much more'. Yeah.
73	Sarah:	You don't stray too far, you're freaking out and he's just standing there calmly and you kind of have to come back, you know (laugh) (yeah, yeah) and look at it from his view, which is always, you know, as you kind of described it, you know, the material is such a small part of the, of what's really there, you know in life and in the world. (Yeah) And yeah the question. You know, I started this journey, when I was in a lot of pain, you know. The back problems were what made me go and look for more, I mean I had hurt myself by being closed off to different parts of myself and I also knew that I needed an answer that wasn't material, that wasn't medical, to, to find my way out of it, and

		that's when I started looking at, you know, mindfulness and becoming more open to...the spiritual part of myself and then connecting with everything else when you do that. When Tom died, if you don't mind me asking...
74	Linda:	No, I don't mind at all.
75	Sarah:	Tom died like, in the pain, could you hold onto those things, because I found I wasn't able to learn when I was in pain, (yeah) it wasn't until afterwards that things started to click in. That pain, yeah, distracted you from holding onto that learning.
76	Linda:	Yeah, well, I... It was very hard to have the experience of... It was really... You know, I, I, it was a whole journey with that because there actually were only a couple of times that, that I really felt...the pain of him, you know, of us not being connected in the same way. (Yeah) So, you know, there is, there is something in a, in any kind of intimate relationship where you actually are able to touch the physical body and feel the warmth. And, to not have that, you know, it's like having one of your senses removed. But the overwhelming experience with him was the connection that continued on. And, and that didn't stop and it doesn't stop, it still goes, so... So there wasn't that kind of pain, in that, in that sense.
77	Linda:	I remember once...and it would have been about...oh, sometime in that first year but maybe towards the second half of the first year after he died, that I was...could have been at night in a darkened house where I was living, the house that we had...lived in for about 5 years before he died, and we had bought it about a year before he died. And, I was sitting in the hallway on the floor and it was a short hallway, I suppose maybe 12 feet something like that, I was sitting somewhere kind of in the middle of it. And, I don't even know why I was sitting there Sarah but I was sitting there. And, and I watched my awareness you know kind of slide over to the, one end of the hall. And I knew that if I went off that end of the hall that I would be going into oblivion, you know, whether I would be going crazy or whether I would be getting myself sick, or whether I would be dying in that instant or something. But it was, there was something that it was just...wanting to move into that direction (yeah) and it was a kind of sense of dreaming/journey in, in that, it was like 'too hard'. And I wasn't feeling emotionally distraught, I was just watching my consciousness kind of move over there and then I would just drag it back to the centre again. And, I did that process for I don't know how many hours...
78	Linda:	but it was, after that that I kind of I made the choice that I was going to carry on and do what I needed to do. Didn't know how I was going to do it because it was such a big...hole in my life, because...I, you know, I... The question that I kept on asking myself is 'who's going to ask me the questions now?', 'who's going to ask me the questions?' Because he, you know, what he had done was he had...in, I mean in, in asking me the things he did, you know, it's like the joke about the planet earth, you know, 'why does that happen?' (Laugh) You know it's like, it had required me to go to a really expansive sense, sensing of the universe and those dimensions and, and that had really been helpful and that, by that time that had been 20 years of being together and so I was rather used to it and you know I kept asking myself after he died 'who's going to ask me all the questions?' judging that I wouldn't be able to generate them myself or something. But I guess I've learned how to generate them myself and I've found other people that ask me the questions, so, it's working out.

79	Linda:	But gardening was an important piece for me. In terms of mindfulness, in terms of...you know really just going to...going to this piece of land which was on a hill that was on the house that we lived in and I just started turning the soil and turning it to different places and it was a lot of hard work and moving stones around and doing that sort of thing and pulling weeds. And I'm, you know, I practiced pulling weeds by...different kinds of weeds had different kinds of needs I wanted to release from myself. And I would have to relax into them (yeah) in a particular way and, and then they would, you know, release and they would be easy to pull out. If I didn't do that, if I just tried to move them as quickly as possible and not attend to them, they would break off and they would stay in there and they would re-sprout. So that was a really important training also, really important practice. And gardening remains something that's really important but I had never, I had never really gardened in that way until that year after Tom died and, and I had to become newly acquainted with that...the garden.
80	Sarah:	You...
81	Linda:	So that's journaling and gardening and...(laugh)
82	Sarah:	Journaling and gardening (laugh) and shifting your awareness around the place, up and down the hall. (Laugh) You said, the night when you were sitting on the floor in the hall, that at the end you decided to stay and do what you needed to do. Do you mean that in a general sense, like, live or do you mean that there was a purpose, a greater purpose?
83	Linda:	Well, I said, I think what I knew at the time was...that whatever part of me, what was watching, you know my, consciousness slip down the hall and knew that, that it had got, this is the end like it was just going to, just like a big, a big, like, what am I trying to say, you know, like a crevasse of some sort, you know, I was going to fall over the edge of something. But I knew that, you know, so what I fell into I wasn't sure but I knew if I got to the end of the hall I would fall over. But whatever part of me was watching that happen, which I think is, you know in some of mindfulness practices that's the observer. (Yeah) And so whatever it was, I, I knew at the end of that, that...the observer was not going to, didn't really want to allow that to happen for whatever reason. And so it didn't feel like it was a mental kind of...'I'm choosing to live' or 'I know I have a purpose now.' It was, it was one of those kind of self evident things that...yeah, it was just like, it has to, continue on and I, I think I probably just went to bed at that point ...
84	Linda:	and got up the next morning early and went out looking for rocks. (Laugh) That was also one of my practices for about....about 6 weeks or something, was that I would, you know, get in the car and I would just drive around the back-roads of Santa Barbara and...you know I had a rule that if there were two rocks, if there were three rocks in a row, that I couldn't take it, because that meant that probably somebody had put it there. But...you know, if it was just a rock or that, you know I'd pull over, load up the rock, (laugh) go on to the next one, kind of, you know, just drive around. I think that was encouraging a connection with, an expansive view of a physical world, 'cause I, you know, tend to not have that so much. Yeah so that was another kind of practice that I did.
85	Sarah:	And what did you do with them?

86	Linda:	Oh, I, literally I built a stone wall. Yeah, yeah, eventually I did that and yeah....yeah. I didn't realise at the time that I was building my stone wall but...the, mortar has lie? in it and that's a good reason to...to use gloves (laugh) when you're mixing mortar. So I was just doing it like it was clay and I was, you know, doing it with my hands and...yeah, so my hands got quite swelled up (laugh) actually from the lie? I assumed, yeah, so that was a funny thing but I, yeah I built a stone wall eventually.
87	Sarah:	And what was it like to look at that wall afterwards and know that these rocks had come from these different places all over town?
88	Linda:	Well, you know what, I didn't think about it that way. (Laugh)
89	Sarah:	Probably too logical, too logical (laugh). Not on the right plain at all.
90	Linda:	Yeah, well it was, it was like 'ha, well I did that'. And I mean it's a little bit like the process of writing and then deleting. (Yeah, yeah) 'Cause it really was the process itself and not....yeah, I mean even more if I had in mind to, I think that I probably had in mind to build some kind of barricade. Not a barricade but, you know, it was a slope that was coming down at the back and I built the stone wall so that it would hold back the slope Yeah. But I, I don't think that I looked at it from the stone/starting point of...that. I, I tend to be more process-oriented, (yeah) in... (yeah) Yeah, so, that's...that's that.
91	Sarah:	And did the stones have to be any particular way? Or the rocks, should I say?
92	Linda:	Yes, did they have to be any particular way?
93	Sarah:	Yeah like were they...were you looking for particular type of rocks or just...
94	Linda:	Oh no, just the ones that....
95	Sarah:	That could be carried (laugh).
96	Linda:	Yeah. They had to be...I mean the criteria was...although I, you know, occasionally this would change, but the criteria was that I had to be able to lift it, (yeah (laugh)) you know but...
97	Sarah:	Good criteria (laugh).
98	Linda:	Well there were a couple of rocks that I got that I looked at and I thought, I mean once I got them home and, and got them out of the car and then saw them later and thought 'wow, who was helping me lift that one?', you know because there were, there were a few that, I, I knew that I had lifted into the back of the car (yeah) but I, I mean I couldn't, I could barely move them just even rolling them, so it was like 'oh, what's that about?' (Yeah) Yeah so, so even the criteria about having to be able to move it varied (laugh). (Yeah)
99	Sarah:	And, and this was done in the first year after losing Tom.

100	Linda:	Yeah, yeah I did that in the first year. 'Cause I, I tried to kind of stay...present (yeah) and...and the garden piece was a really useful piece...and (yeah) yeah, and it was, it was interesting because...I did, I started at the...I wasn't, I wasn't living in the house I was staying down with friends in a place that I worked but during the week in Los Angeles, And, so it was really about 6 months after he died that I...I went, I went back to Santa Barbara, I hadn't been there, to our house and, and I had his ashes on the car seat beside me and I knew that I was going to spend the first night in Santa Barbara but I didn't know what I was going to be doing after that. I knew I had to...I knew I had to do something. (Yeah) And...so I went on a leave of absence from the work that I was doing and I...packed a few things up and (laugh) his ashes were in a shoebox in the seat, on the seat next to me and I drove in to the driveway and...I stopped at the lower part of the driveway and I got out and, and I started pulling weeds. And I thought 'well that's so interesting that's the first action' so, (yeah) you know that's always been a guideline for me, is what is it that I'm actually doing. And because if I, I just go with what it is that I am doing, and then I see if I can connect it or if it answers something that I may have been asking. (Yeah) So I, the question was 'what am I going to do here?' and the first action was 'I'm pulling weeds.' And so I ended up staying, I literally I, I turned over every inch of that soil, of that property. (Yeah)
101	Sarah:	It's really quite metaphorical because it kind of sounds like you did have a choice about whether you would leave (yes) and join Tom or stay and you engaged in something very physical that was literally grounded (yes) and, and tended to the weeds, you know, clear the space for yourself.
102	Linda:	Yeah, yeah, yeah, I did.
103	Sarah:	Yeah, it's amazing. And brave...
104	Linda:	(Laugh) I really...I really think that that's...I mean, I, I really pay attention to that because I think that everything that we do is both metaphorical and, and...and more than metaphorical, you know, that it's, that it's grounded and...yeah, that it's just...that there's some thread that goes, you know, when we think about the different bodies we inhabit like the physical body and the emotional body and the mental body and the spiritual body and on, on out, that there's a thread that goes through all of that and we can actually, we can access it and really point along the way(yeah)
105	Linda:	And...you know, that's, that's part of also what I try to do and part of my practice has also been...to really do a lot of bodywork. I...I...I mean, I don't, I mean I have a lot of, I participate in a lot of different forms of body work or I have, over the years. And that has been....that's also big because it's not kind of naturally my...where I pay attention. (Yeah) You know some people are so aware of their bodies and...I can remember...again being, you know, quite young and my mother looking at me and saying 'you look a little funny what's wrong with you?' and I'd say 'you know what, I don't know if I'm hungry...or if I ate something, or if I'm too full or if I ate something that's making me sick, I just don't know'. And, you know, most people would know which one of those, it was. And, so, so, grounding myself in the physical and, and being, using my body to, to experience other states of awareness has been also one of the practices that I've had.
106	Sarah:	And gardening being an example of that?

107	Linda:	Yeah, but gardening is, you know, it's still outside. So, you know, I've done, I've done 'heller work'? And 'Rolfing', and....and the 'Alexander Technique' and 'Tondercrise'??? and Tai Chi and...what else, a lot chiropractic work, a lot of...now I do physio-synthesis with the woman who lives next door to me. So a lot of the things where, you know, it's actual physical manipulation (yeah) of your body, of teaching your body new techniques, and you know, teaching you postures or ways to move or...that sort of thing, more than, more than...and it relates to the gardening and it relates to some of the other things that I've engaged with but I actually mean, (yeah) you know, physical manipulation of one's body.
108	Sarah:	And would you have a favourite or something that you feel has had the most impact?
109	Linda:	They are all my favourites.
110	Sarah:	You're very diplomatic Linda (laugh).
111	Linda:	Ultimately is that I do it. Is it...you know it's not really that I'm thinking about it 'I need to find some way of doing such-and-such'. Oh Pilates is another one that I have found great, yeah...and also Northern Yoga more than Hatha Yoga, I mean I practice yoga in other ways but not so much in a physical way. But, but like Pilates is a really...do you know what it is?
112	Sarah:	Yeah.
113	Linda:	I was really blessed that, I, I found this woman who had been a dancer and she had a small Pilates studio, it was not far from where I lived and I worked with her three times a week for...like maybe two years (yeah) or something like that. And she had...and it was just, we just had individual sessions each, and what she did was that she didn't try to make it an athletic experience, she tried to make it a consciousness experience. So learning of where you're putting your body and so forth. (Yeah) And where you're putting your awareness in your body and the impact of that. And then she, it was funny, 'cause she was trying to expand her practice, her business... She got this young woman in who was...basically from the athletic (laugh) trend or you know, way, approach, (yeah) and, and the woman kept on saying 'no, no, no, you're going to get bored with this, we need to vary your routine' and it was such a different, you know, it was like 'I'm not doing this to build up my muscles, I mean not those muscles, I'm doing this...to...do something else.' So I stopped going because (yeah) it really wasn't working in that way. And I thought 'how funny, you know, that...how many times have I done it, you know, is it a thousand times now that I've done these, the same sequence,' it wouldn't be a thousand times, it would have been...you know, three times whatever, (yeah) three hundred, four hundred, five hundred times...that I've done the same sequence and I'm not bored with it so I really don't, it forces you to think of something else when you're trying to learn a new routine.
114	Sarah:	Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it stops the awareness going inward. Yeah, yeah. (Yeah) Instead you're being stimulated externally. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
115	Linda:	I think if I had to do anything or if I had to say anything, it would be Pilates that has been my favourite, because...not only, not only did I have Astrid who was a teacher who was...wonderful but then I also had Lynette, who...who had had...some kind of...and I can't remember what it was, but she had some kind of form of physical

		disability which she'd been born with and she had...used Pilates as a way of bringing her body into full functioning and so she was, she was even more...about consciousness (yeah) and you know Astrid, than Astrid, because Astrid would, would say 'okay, you know, so do ten repetitions of that', Lynette would, once you got it and she had seen that your body got it, she'd say 'okay, now let's move on'. And, you know, there was something that was so lovely. And she helped me get my own Pilates Reformer. And so I have that and so I still do that and so I'm able to work from that myself (yeah) and....and I do that almost where...it's not an exercise for me, it's, it's probably, it's probably the most regular meditative practice that I do. In the sense that people usually mean by meditative practices where they stop what they're doing and they go practice something.
116	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah. And that kind of introduces the idea of bringing this personal learning into a possible workplace. You were saying did you mean that you got a qualification in the Pilates? Is that what you meant?
117	Linda:	Oh, I, you know, I'm, you'll have to say it again Sarah (sorry) because there was some disruption on the connection.
118	Sarah:	You were saying that you got a certain something in the Pilates that Lynette helped you to get something, was that like a qualification like a certificate to use it?
119	Linda:	No, no. (Sorry) No I meant...in a more general sense of it's like 'oh' you know you have that insight and you go 'oh, I got it'
120	Sarah:	Okay, yes, yeah, yeah.
121	Linda:	That's what I meant, got it you know, she helped me get something different that.... Oh, oh, no I, I know what you mean. Yeah, I'm sorry, I was, I was... No...have you ever done Pilates?
122	Sarah:	Yeah, just in a class format. And I've done mindful yoga at home.
123	Linda:	Yeah, so, you probably did just floor exercises. (Yeah) Have you ever seen...it's, they call it a machine but it's, it's, it's called a 'Reformer' and it's actually...it's, it's probably about 8 feet long and it has pulleys on it and it's just a flat bed, if I had my...video camera working I would just take you in there and show you but it's actually this wood and some areas are padded and it's a very simple device but that's the original way that Pilates was done. (Oh) So she help me get one of those kind of machines.
124	Sarah:	Oh, that's what you meant, right.
125	Linda:	Yeah. (Laugh) Yes a reformer, so I can, is what it's called and it's just for, I mean it sounds like...reforming yourself but it is about reforming yourself (laugh).
126	Sarah:	Physical self.
127	Linda:	Yeah and so that's...yeah, because I, because I learned it not as floor exercises but as on the reformer with Astrid and then I worked with Lynette in that way...it's, it's a different kind of process than it is doing the floor exercises. (Yeah) And... 'cause it gives you resistance, because of the pulleys and things like that, so...so once, once I got my own reformer then I could take everything that I'd learn from the teachers

		and I could just do it myself on a regular basis. (Very good) And it, it, and I don't know that you know you're floor exercises were like this, but some of the floor exercises are a little...energetic because you're trying to provide the kind of...resistance through movement that the reformer...provides by the different weights and the different, you know, pulleys on it. So it just, it, the reformer really slows down the process. So you're really doing loooonnnng, slow stretches. And, so, yeah, it becomes much more of a meditative practice with the reformer than that, so...
128	Sarah:	I must look into that. That sounds amazing.
129	Linda:	Yeah. (Yeah) And I, and when I got one of the, I got one of the ones that's...they have, they have some in a less expensive ones now, but I got this because Lynette knew somebody who had a really upscale studio and this had, this was a wood frame and so it had too many little things in it so she wanted to get rid of it 'cause it didn't look good enough for her classy people. And so there were a couple of things that I had to get for it, like new ropes put on it and things but it was, it was really great because it's so solid and it's not like, they, they, they do some that are now, you know these little metal things so they're more lightweight but this is like the Reformer, yeah it's a beautiful piece.
130	Sarah:	Cool.
131	Linda:	You make me want to rush in there and do it now.
132	Sarah:	Sorry (laugh). So, so tell me, do you bring these kinds of learnings and these practices then into your work?
133	Linda:	Yeah. So, I don't think I could do the work that I do, well I know I couldn't, (laugh) if I weren't doing...the practices that I'm doing.
134	Sarah:	And just to define what it is that you do, 'cause I experienced you as a facilitator but that's only...one very small part of what you do.
135	Linda:	What do I do? Oh, now that's a tough question isn't it? What is it that I do? You're just, you know, getting in to an area see that, it's, it's been the bane of my existence. (Laugh) I, I used to have friends that would say to me...well I have friends that used to say to me I should say, rather than I used to have friends...(Laugh) (When I had friends) (laugh) I think, one in particular, Michael was always saying 'why couldn't you do such a job like a nurse or a teacher so we can just say you do such-and-such' you know, and I'd say 'well I know what it is that I do but it just doesn't have a label on it'. (Yeah) And it seems like, you know, that's kind of all of the work that I've ever done has been a little like that is that it doesn't have an easy way of talking about.
136	Linda:	1.05.30 So, you know, for the last few years I have...I have really, I've been working with Daniel on the 'Learning for Wellbeing' piece... And that has actually been...a lot of...what I actually do is, what I do...I can do writing but conceptually, trying to conceptualise and link with other bodies of work and with people who are interested...but don't know what it is that we're doing and trying to inspire our own team and trying to keep some sense of connection between us, (yeah) so I don't know what all of that's called but I couldn't do it if I weren't practicing. And you

		know, before that what I did do was...with Human Dynamics...was that we first started off as a group...doing very open practices and then three of us kind of stayed around, Sandra, David and myself, and we kind of shaped what then became 'Human Dynamics' and...started working with that and trained a lot of facilitators and wrote a lot of manuals, (yeah) did videotaping and editing and yeah but, yeah, mostly I like to think of myself as a facilitator but I'm not a stand up facilitator but just somebody who's trying to make it easy. (Yeah) Yeah.
137	Linda:	So I mean I've had a very particular kind of job profile but I think that one of the things that I, I really feel committed to, is to help people...who are doing many different kinds of jobs...do their jobs more mindfully, because I think that that's the only way that we stay healthy as, as individuals and together and have our climate healthy and our organisations healthy and...our relationships healthy. I think that, you know that, if, if we're not willing to wake up...and we can't find ways of waking up or we feel like we go to work and we have to check our awake self at the door...you know, we're just, yeah we're continuing to destroy ourselves basically, is what I think.
138	Sarah:	So holding those ideas...the idea of self-care and wellbeing, and then mindfulness. Would self-care and wellbeing have the same kind of meaning for you?
139	Linda:	Self-care and wellbeing?
140	Sarah:	I suppose those words or concepts...
141	Linda:	So which ones are you linking?
142	Sarah:	So, I suppose, you're talking there about, you know, being mindful in our lives and in our jobs is a way of staying healthy and is that, you know, some people would see self-care, okay, I suppose, in the past I have seen self-care as, you know, taking your lunch breaks, having a bath, (yeah) having friends and now I would see wellbeing for me being far more personal, internal and, and deeper than what I would have originally called self-care. Now they're my definitions. (Yeah) So for you, would self-care and then having a fuller sense of wellbeing be different or are they the same?
143	Linda:	Well I think that...it's really how you define self.
144	Sarah:	Yeah. It's whether you recognise all the different parts. (Yeah) Will determine how far you go in your self-care.
145	Linda:	Yeah, yeah.
146	Sarah:	That's very interesting, yeah.
147	Linda:	So, for me...you know, wellbeing, I mean one of, one of the things is that the definition that, that Learning for Wellbeing is using is...is one that I helped craft. And, I think that if...I think that if I had....I had put it in a couple of words, I, I, I think, well yeah, here's what I think (laugh)...sorry if you find this is going to be...so all over the place for you but, you know, if this doesn't give you what you need Sarah I'm happy to talk again. And I'm...

148	Sarah:	This is great for me Linda, this is what I want, yeah.
149	Linda:	There really, one of the things that, that, I mean I don't talk about this within the Learning for Wellbeing movement because what I talk about to the other people that I'm working with and...and I think that the reason that whole, that wellbeing is...become such a popular term recently, in the last few years, is that what we're searching, I think we're using wellbeing as a term that is a proxy for wholeness. (Yeah) So, we don't really know what wholeness is but we are talking about it as wellbeing and we're trying to extend what we typically thought of as wellbeing, and keep on expanding that. And so...you know, I often say what I mean by wellbeing is for me a sense of wholeness and vitality because I think those are the...those are two words that have meaning for me...around wellbeing. (Yeah) And so it really is...when I...when I look at, you know, self-care, I really try to care for self. And, and actually self doesn't, you know, doesn't end at my skin... It, yeah, when I...if I could see you you see, you're not seeing me but I'm looking at you and I'm thinking, well I'm experiencing that, that self extends to you as well. That, you know, that you're a part of self. And so, self-care for me is not just about...Linda self, (yeah) it's also about self, which is you, as well as me, and what's happening between us and our relationship. So, self-care then becomes a very large piece, yeah. And, and I think part of self-care is also, is keeping on extending that sense of self. Yeah. So...
150	Sarah:	So, so are self-care and wellbeing...in the same ballpark for you or do they have different beginning and ends?
151	Linda:	Well, I mean just listening to it...for me self-care...well, yeah, I think it just depends on how you define self. Self-care for one thing sounds to me as though it's the practices, techniques, the approach that you might use for wellbeing. (Okay) Yeah, yeah. (Yeah, yeah) And, and I can imagine that people could begin self-care, I mean, I, you know, I personally I'm thrilled with people who begin self-care in any sense of it, so if it's taking breaks, if it's...you know meditating on, you know, visualising peace in the world, that seems like self-care. You know recognising that, that sometimes you have to be, you have to spend some time in nature, on your own, that's self-care is...getting it straight with your family relationships, self-care. And I think that all of those things contribute to wellbeing which I think is that sense of wholeness and vitality. So that's kind of how I would...describe it.
152	Sarah:	And have you ever experienced a time in your life when you haven't done those things for yourself?
153	Linda:	Oh absolutely, I mean, well, you know, I think that....yeah, I mean, I think the biggest thing that I have experienced is...perhaps caring for myself in certain ways that were natural...for me. And...not caring for myself in other ways that...or fragmenting those ways of doing that. So, what I would mean by that would be...you know, as I said, for me a challenge is being in my physical body. (Yeah) That really is a challenge for me. Now it's also a gift because what it means is that I can get on an airplane and...I can have a window seat and I can do what I did the last time I went to Australia, I flew into New Zealand, it's LAX to Auckland it's 12 hours almost exactly. And the women next to me...there were two women that were sitting next to me and I, at the end of the flight I got up and I said 'oh, I'm really ready to just stand up' and they said 'that's right, you didn't get up the entire trip', you know, and, and it just...I said 'I guess I didn't', you know, it's like, I didn't... And, you know, that's, that is a gift under certain

		circumstances and it's also something one needs to work with. (Yeah)
154	Linda:	You know for me So...there will be times when I am being...I would say, you know, connecting with my deepest source, being mindful about my relationships with people, doing really extraordinarily good work, and...choosing, even some of the basic types of physical care for myself, yeah, like, you know I mean like I can tell you the other examples is that I have a friend that I have known for fifty years now, we met in grade school. And he now has learned within the last 6 years, this happened 6 years ago, that I was...that he called me one afternoon, and it was late afternoon and...he said 'how are you?' and I said 'I'm just feeling kind of funny, I'm just a little off or something' and I had been working and so his phone call was the first time that I was interacting with somebody and...and he said 'why' and he kind of went through a couple of things and then he said 'well did you have lunch?' and I went 'Lunch? I didn't even have breakfast?' and it was like 5 in the afternoon and I just hadn't noticed, you know, so....I... So for me that is a, that is, that's a constant struggle, lunch is...like whatever. That is a constant struggle to stay present and in my body and... And, and, I don't think that that struggle is any better or any worse than somebody that has trouble maintaining emotional boundaries, you know, that's, that's another struggle. You know, bleeding and letting everybody else's emotions bleed into your own, you know that's...I feel empathic that I know, I've always had this sense of self of I know where I end...I know what's my emotion and what's somebody else's. So, you know, that's a gift that I don't always know whether I'm hungry or...sick (laugh). (Yeah) That, that, that would be, so... I don't know, did that answer your question.
155	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah it did and it's interesting and normally people see the other connection, (laugh) you know, people normally know when they're hungry or not or whatever but they might be trying to connect with themselves on a physical spiritual level, (yeah) which you seem to have always had that kind of a connection and come at things from that kind of a way.
156	Linda:	Yeah I think I have.
157	Sarah:	It is a gift.
158	Linda:	But it's also the other part is been heard and I, and I think it...for me it's been about trying to...
159	Sarah:	I'm losing you.....Sorry Linda could you say that again, I lost you there.....Yeah I have you back now.
160	Linda:	Okay. (Yeah) Okay so I think the, the piece for me has been to stay...is to allow all of those aspects to really integrate...because I mean, kind of conceptually or my, my, my...cosmological view would be that, that as spirit beings we can do, we can actually???? when we're in this material form, so when we're incarnate on the planet earth, we can ???experience and we can interact and we can and so it's really important to not??? You know it's like??? This is ???that we have, this time...can you still hear me?
161	Sarah:	Yeah, I'm just losing the odd bit. How am I for you?

162	Linda:	You're okay but I wonder should we, sometimes we have, I mean on Skype sometimes when we go for a while, we have to reconnect, because...should we try doing that?
163	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah.
164	Linda:	Okay, let's hang up then.
165	Sarah:	Okay.
166	Linda:	Hi, that should, that, you know, that sometimes helps.
167	Sarah:	Great, yeah, that's perfect now. (Okay) So, sorry.
168	Linda:	No, it's fine. Yeah so I was just saying my cosmology is such that I, I think that, that the work that we do as human beings in form and in our bodies is really, be field work for whatever else, you know, we're doing. And, so it's not to be taken lightly. And so I consider that, that my work with my physical body and trying to bring all of myself through that physical body as well as...through all of my other bodies is, is really the point for me is like the integration of that and so I, I, it's not, it's not an insignificant piece for me is what I'm trying to say. (Yeah, yeah) Self-care of the physical body.
169	Sarah:	Because you're engaging all of the other aspects in order to do that.
170	Linda:	Yes, absolutely, yeah, yeah. And...yeah and I... and I think people start in different places. And, so that's...that's kind of the wonder of...the wonder of us, is that we do begin in different places and... And for me what's important is, is the, the bringing it all together which is part of what I mean by wholeness and wellbeing.
171	Sarah:	And the process.
172	Linda:	And the process of course...because, yeah...yeah 'cause I know, you know, I don't have any sense about...end results really, I mean I'm trying to take myself as far as I can, and...that's, you know, that's my commitment is that I just keep on (growing) towards arriving somewhere. I mean I hear people talk about...you know so-and-so achieving enlightenment or...'well you don't need this because you've done so much work on yourself' or, you know, those sort of things and I just I've always assumed that if we're still incarnated, that we, that we have work to do, that we have work that we can do, so I just want to, you know, do as much as I can...while I can. (Yeah, yeah)
173	Sarah:	God there are so many questions that I could ask now in response to that, but I won't.
174	Linda:	Yeah, so, I hope that, I hope that you'll want to talk to me another time.
175	Sarah:	Oh yeah, yeah, I know, my head is going 'gosh, what happens next Linda?' but I'm not 'cause it has nothing to do with the thesis (laugh) but I will save that one for later.
176	Linda:	Yeah, good, okay. But, but, what's, yeah, what, what else do you need?
177	Sarah:	So in relation to the thesis then, I mean you've spoken a lot and...you kind of, you've

		<p>mirrored things that I have thought about and you've put it in language that makes sense to me, that I have wondered 'how will I put that into language for other people?' You know. So that's been brilliant, I've gotten a lot from the conversation. In relation then to information that I haven't kind of gotten I suppose, you, you know you spoke a lot about your own life and your own practices and you said that you couldn't do the work that you do without engaging in those practices for yourself. (Right) And do you bring those practices into work as part of you or do you actually do them as part of your work, as in, with groups or with other people?</p>
178	Linda:	<p>Well, I, what I try to do is I always try to bring my full self to whatever the experience is, now whether that shows up explicitly or implicitly, really depends on who the person is and what the context is. (Yeah) And so when I say who the person is I really mean the, like who the group collectively and component-wise, who's in the group. You know, because I could say that... For example, in a recent experience in, in France...you know, I was so aware that the point that...yeah, it's really, it's really interesting to think about this, that there were two points of attention for me that were outside of myself. (Yeah) So I was trying to bring something that was full in on myself but I was also tracking Daniel...who had certain expectations and, and has...is really trying to grow in his own way so I'm aware of some of the places that, that he's using the 'Learning for Wellbeing' movement...to grow in himself and I was also trying to track the group. (Yeah) And probably felt like I was hitting, you know, if you imagine a kind of circle and you have different, you know, places and you know it's like there's a midpoint of consciousness, awareness of the group and, you know, I was trying to hit somewhere in the middle of that so that there were, would be some people that would be going 'oh yeah, I resonate with this' and some people would be going 'ha? What?' you know, so I was trying to hit some place in the middle of that. And that would be...pretty typical.</p>
179	Linda:	<p>So, so what I would bring in explicitly would really depend on...what we were there to do together and which I think in this case was a little cloudy and a little mixed 'cause we had too many different agendas going on about, you know, what was...what the purpose of it was (yeah) and agendas that hadn't been clear with one another and, so the context was a little cloudy for me...and...yeah and I think that the group was really a pretty...yeah, so there's, there's two things I'm tracking so it's like I'm tracking the consistency...the consciousness in the group and then the awareness of the consciousness in the group because, you know, there's certain things that you know you're aware of but...I said that the wrong way, I meant the awareness of the group and the consciousness of the awareness so I think that the consciousness is a little bit...more...at the surface so that you can access it so you're conscious of something, you may be aware of it but you're not able to bring it into language and if you're conscious of something you can usually bring it in to language so that's a distinction I'm making there. And I...I think the group was really aware, I don't think that you could bring their awareness into consciousness, so yeah, I think we did what we could do. (Yeah) So that doesn't answer your question, explicitly and implicitly I try to bring my full self but I may not actually teach the tools that I'm using. In fact I normally don't teach the tools that I'm using.</p>
180	Sarah:	<p>You brought...mindfulness now might not be the correct term but you certainly used meditation and you used shifting awareness like the exercises around placing your awareness in the physical (yes) and the lovely, what was it called, the mountain exercise?</p>

181	Linda:	Oh the 'Mountain, Valley, World' visualisation yes.
182	Sarah:	Yes, and that was lovely. So you're bringing that kind of...mindfulness practices into the group and how do you, as a facilitator, how is that experience and then how do your groups experience it?
183	Linda:	Bringing that in. So, so that would be the...you know...I, I have...I've worked with so many different people over the years and, so, so sometimes we're able to bring, sometimes we're able to come together around like the 'Mountain, Valley World' visualisation for instance. There's a lot of people that I have worked with that I would not be able to do that. (Yeah) Because they have something about closing their eyes or they have something about visualisations, they work in a high-tech organisation and they don't know how to...think about doing that. But I've certainly done that a lot with children (laugh). They love it, you know, so... So that's what I mean like it depends on the context, whether I use that explicit kind of thing. What I would try to do would be to always make people aware of the shifting, the benefit of, of learning how to shift your awareness and to be aware of when you're shifting your awareness. So that's...that particular point would be something I would always try to do. But I might not do it explicitly, I might do it by modelling something. (Yeah)
184	Linda:	So a lot of times when I work, you know, specifically around the individual patterns of processing, which we really didn't get into, we kind of touched on it, you know, you've seen the video of the three ways of being centred and that sort of thing and then we go on and we start exploring your own patterns of processing and how that, that might relate. So how you and John might be different or so forth. So then when I start talking about that, I am responding to people by shifting my awareness and people are able to resonate with that without me being able, without me needing to say 'let's sit and let's shift our awareness'. (Yeah) So...do you know what I mean by that?
185	Sarah:	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
186	Linda:	Okay.
187	Sarah:	And you spoke about you know you couldn't do your job whatever that might be, if you weren't engaging in these practices. How important do you think occupation and what one does is to somebody's wellbeing?
188	Linda:	I think it's a piece that is really...I think there are several pieces that are really important. One is that I think that one's occupation has to...be in alignment with one's values and that...so that's one. I think that...one has to have a sense in one's occupation that one has an opportunity to express one's full self in that process in a way that feels best to you. (Yeah) So there are....you know I mentioned high-tech companies and so forth. There are many different ways of being an engineer and...there's a few dominant models of that. And so, for me, I mightn't be a good engineer but given the models that I've seen for being an engineer, in the companies that I've worked with, I would be an abysmal failure and I would always be trying to work against myself, in doing that. So that would not be a good occupation for me unless somebody gave me the opportunity to do it in the way that would be best for me. (Yeah, yeah)

189	Linda:	So I think that's a really important piece. I mean, I think, you know, in terms of values, and saying 'Values', it's like, really I mean, that, that there's some kind, that I'm able to...feel like I can, you know, perform, perform the job, that I have the tools I need for that, that it has meaning and purpose for me. That whatever I'm engaged in, that it...yeah, that it would, you know that it fills something in me. And I'm saying me but I mean, you know, speaking of this in terms of the people that I know, that have various occupations and who feels like they're nurturing their wellbeing and who feels like they're not. And it's, it's these, it's the people that can't relax in one way or another, in their jobs. So they always feel that they don't have the skills or that they don't have the innate capacity or the job requires them, some kind of physical...physical capacity that it, that they can't perform so they can't relax in that, that it doesn't have meaning for them so that they can't relax knowing that they're doing something that touches their own deep purpose. (Yeah) So in those, in those ways I think.
190	Sarah:	And have you ever experimented with narrative or...even your understanding of what I mean when I say narrative as a technique or as a way of doing research.
191	Linda:	Tell me what you mean by narrative.
192	Sarah:	I suppose what I mean, at the moment is like that I'm using narrative inquiry as part of this thesis which is trying to capture people's stories (yeah) as opposed to having a very set agenda. I'm more interested in people's stories of how they developed mindfulness or their occupation or where journaling fits into their own personal story. (Yeah) And, you know, some people, that wouldn't be their approach and I suppose the question then is how do you feel about storytelling and narrative? Do you think it's important?
193	Linda:	Oh I think it's the only thing that's important really (laugh). You know, I mean the only thing that's important in terms of...communicating what...in terms of research, let's just say, you know the broad kind of area that we call research. So there's a number of different ways of...that I'm familiar with. You know, I came out of a...my Masters is in Psychology and it's in...it's in Information Processing and Perception and, and I, I did work in Social Science Research for a number of years, 8, 9. Then I, you know, worked...in providing to Human Development Services in one way or another. And in all of those I, I really used narrative as a...in the way that you're using it, as the basic foundation of collecting information, so... So even...in the, in the kinds of things where we used to talk with people about how they process, it's always their individual story (Yeah) about how they do that, it's not trying to administer a questionnaire or survey of some sort or even a, you know, a focus group kind of thing where you're, you have some kind of basic questions that you want the group to agree on and you may collect a few narratives or stories as part of that but you're basically trying to synthesise around some topic guides.
194	Linda:	I think that, that one of the things that, that story and narrative does is that...it provides the richness of the context in which people are talking. And it also helps...you know, it also helps bridge that kind of individual perspective and the...human perspective, the human journey, because you know stories, stories are actually little mythologies, so to speak, 'cause, you know, my, I have just told you a number of stories that are...from my own personal life and of course I think that I'm telling them as they happened because it is that, how they happened but it's not the

		only way in which they happened. So if somebody else were telling you...the same sequence of events from their perspective, it might lead to a totally different conclusion to, you know, than I would arrive at. And there's something about that that is both individual and collective (yeah) and... And, the third thing is that, is that I'm making meaning out of telling my story and it's not only meaning for you but there's something about that story that I chose to tell that, that also helps me connect with you around the level at which I want to connect with you. So there's, there's multiple advantages to doing storytelling.
195	Sarah:	That's great. It's great to talk to somebody who's actually used to it as well.
196	Linda:	Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, the original ways that we...talked about the patterns which were, you know, then later called Human Dynamics was that we actually started with stories that...that were, you know, 'I am' kind of stories (yeah) that we're trying to identify...and actually the original stories started with 'I am an experiment', 'I'm an individual experiment', 'I'm a personal experiment', 'I'm an experiment in action', 'I'm, you know,...' They were always about 'I am' and, and talking about being an experiment. Now people, some people react really heavily to that word 'experiment' because they believe that, you know, it's like a scientific experiment where you probe something and you know... I love the word experiment because for me it's like, it's like 'oh, I'm...I'm experimenting with this, I'm just learning and...' I wouldn't take it so very seriously, it's not the only, it's not, it's not the only time I'm going to get to work with this, it's an experiment.
197	Sarah:	It gives permission doesn't it (yeah) to (yeah) have different outcomes and get it right and wrong.
198	Linda:	Yeah, yeah, exactly and again I think it's you know, I think it's the process for me, it's yeah it's...yes exactly, it gives permission.
199	Sarah:	So this narrative interview, how have you experienced this, the last two hours?
200	Linda:	Wow. (Laugh)
201	Sarah:	We're gone over an hour and a half anyway but it's going to be a two hour interview. How's that been for you?
203	Linda:	Oh it's been lovely talking with you, yeah. And also...you know one of the things that I am really interested in, and...and I would have loved to have done some more work with it but there's so much to do and, you know, you have such a brief time together in, you know, like the experience that we had in France. (Yeah) But I would have loved to have introduced the whole notion of threads. (Yeah) Because we started off having, you know, what's your persistent contribution and your persistent challenge in communication. And...but I think that there's...and its related to narrative, it's this, this whole looking at these threads that run through your life which I...I never believe that life is not random and it's not random because we're not random, so we, you know, we chose certain experiences and, and we make meaning out of them and that meaning that we make creates...other experiences. And those are kind of like the themes of the narrative (yeah) and some of it's been...
204	Linda:	it's always interesting because I, I don't really talk a lot about my own experiences in

		<p>this way or, you know, like us now. I don't remember how many times, maybe three people that I've ever told about that experience about sitting in the hall. Not because it's a secret, you know, it's just there are so many things to talk about. But it's really, it's been an interesting experience for me because I've been doing...what I'm advocating for others to do which is to, you know, to kind of follow those themes that are running through my life that are in this case about self-care and wellbeing and mindfulness, so it's been fun. I liked it. I learned something. I will, I will actually take this experience and the next piece that I'm going to do is...is today is that I'm going to go into my studio and work with fabric and so, this will be part of what I use to create whatever I'm going to create with fabric today. (Great) Yeah.</p>
205	Sarah:	<p>That's great. And then I suppose to end, is there anything that I haven't asked that you think is important to ask?</p>
206	Linda:	<p>Oh, it's always everything and nothing (laugh). You know, it's like I could continue on and, and I think it's, it's all been there in what you're talking about. I'm very interested to see what you're going to...come up with with your thesis.</p>
207	Sarah:	<p>So am I Linda, so am I (laugh). I have no idea and I'm just going to trust the process. I'm just going to write the story of researching (yeah, yeah, it's great) and hope it makes sense (laugh).</p>
208	Linda:	<p>Yeah. It's a really...you know, it's like one of the things that we have as a, you know, kind of as a useful metaphor is the whole notion about life's journey. (Yeah) And...the course it's like, you know, it's like the Canterbury tales, where there was the journey but then there were the stories that were within the journey and then the meta story that speaks to the entire journey, and...so story and journey are really interwoven, aren't they?</p>
209	Sarah:	<p>Yeah, very much so, yeah.</p>
210	Linda:	<p>Yeah. So that's great, that's great.</p>
211	Sarah:	<p>Hopefully. (Yeah) Ah, no, it is, it is.</p>
212	Linda:	<p>And...yeah...so, if there's any way that I can help you further please let me know and (I will) I mean, around your thesis, but of course not helping you but...if there's any, if there's anything that I can engage with you personally, I'd love to.</p>
213	Sarah:	<p>Well I really hope that we, well I'll stay in contact but I'd hope that we get to meet again, you know (Yeah) like to sit on my couch and have a chat.</p>
214	Linda:	<p>Yes, great.</p>
215	Sarah:	<p>Yeah, yeah. And thank you so much for participating. I really got a lot.</p>
216	Linda:	<p>Oh, good, I hope so because it felt like sometimes I was just meandering around but...yeah, so, but, and really Sarah if you need, if you need clarification on anything 'cause sometimes, you know, I know that I don't finish my sentences and in the moment you think 'oh yeah' and then you think 'she didn't finish that though, what was she saying?' So any...please don't hesitate to ask me for that.</p>

217	Sarah:	Well what I'm going to do now is transcribe it and then I'll email it to you so that you can just...be sure that that when you give consent that you know exactly what you're giving consent for. And I might have 2 or 3 questions after the transcription about 'oh, what did you mean there?' or 'what was that word?' Or, you know...
218	Linda:	Yeah, and so if you have anything like that because, because I'll tell you I just...I won't read over what I said (Oh grand, that's okay) (laugh) but I, I know you need to send it to me so that I can, I can make informed consent but (yeah, yeah, yeah) I, I consent.
219	Sarah:	That's amazing. I, I just think that's an amazing quality that you can do something and then let it go. It's amazing, I just wouldn't have it in me.
220	Linda:	Well, there it is.
221	Sarah:	Fair play, fair play.
222	Linda:	I'm glad that you think that that's a plus because there are many people who wouldn't.
223	Sarah:	Oh it's a gift, it just frees up space within your own consciousness. Once it's done it's done. It's great.
224	Linda:	Can't do anything about that now (laugh).
225	Sarah:	So thank you very much.
226	Linda:	You're very welcome Sarah. And I'll talk to you again soon.
227	Sarah:	Yeah and I'm looking at a picture of you and your cat, that's what's coming up on the screen.
228	Linda:	That isn't a good shot.
229	Sarah:	What's her name?
230	Linda:	Minushah?
231	Sarah:	Minushah
232	Linda:	Yes, she was...she was named because the, the second Tom, my second husband Tom, who I married after Tom died...came, I came home one day from being with a friend that is Jewish and, and I evidently said to him something about 'oh it was just a lot of ' and he had seen the word written but he had never heard anybody say it (yeah) and so he was thinking '???' must be something like Menshk??, Minora???' you know like a Jewish term of some sort. But he, of course he told me that about three years later when he had finally gone 'oh Minushah??' and I said that's such a cute story I'll name my next cat Minushah' and that's how she got the name.
233	Sarah:	She looks like a little lion.
234	Linda:	Yeah.

235	Sarah:	She's great.
236	Linda:	Okay, see you.
237	Sarah:	Thank you Linda.
238	Linda:	Take care, say hi to John.
239	Sarah:	Will do, thank you, bye.
240	Linda:	Bye.