

## Summary of AI sessions with Jean Dixon and Katy Menell at Prospect Hill

24.08.12 and 31.08.2012

### 1. **PETER POWIS**

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EMPLOYMENT DETAILS: Self-employed clinical psychologist in private practice. I also consult for a couple of organisations that provide residential treatment of addictions and eating disorders.

2. **AI TRAINING:** completed 4 day training in Cape Town in August 2011

3. **ORGANISATION I WORKED WITH:** The Prospect Hill Recovery Practice is a practice committed to providing affordable, accessible support to people seeking freedom from addiction. In addition to providing services themselves, they aim to work collaboratively with others in the field of recovery to enhance service delivery locally (in the Cape Town area) and nationally. They also aim to contribute expertise through an inclusive, systemic approach that includes the wider systems affected by addiction such as the family and workplace.

4. **CORE GROUP:** Prospect Hill is a small organisation started and run by Jean Dixon and Katy Menell. They collaborate with others and have a part-time receptionist. The 2 founders were included in the Core Group.

5. **TOPIC:** Using the interview schedule designed for the first session, (see appendix) we confirmed two focus areas. (I had asked them to discuss what they felt they would like to focus on prior to our first meeting).

i. They wanted to grow their business in two areas:

- **firstly** to develop further collaborative projects that would grow "innovative and sustainable" services using mutual strengths and passions. This was important as they had limited time, energy, space and person power available within Prospect Hill itself;
- **secondly** to grow their group-based services as they both felt that one-on-one work was limiting and they could reach more people, more cheaply, more powerfully and make more money through offering groups. They also felt that they wanted to bring more creativity and "a sense of play" into their groups by integrating art, movement etc and spirituality into some of their groups.

6 i. Using the interview schedule attached we discussed what inspired Jean and Katy to co-found Prospect Hill. Here the **key values** were about developing affordable, accessible and sustainable services in a profitable and equitable way; to enhance their own personal freedom to grow as autonomous, creative individuals free of the constraints of any one big organisation; similarly they wanted their organisation to be autonomous and free to develop co-operative relationships with a wide variety of recovery organisations.

6 ii. We explored what it was about each of them that gave them the confidence in each other to begin this project together. Jean mentioned that she knew that Katy was "mad enough to dare to try something new and be creative, was "willing to listen to my madness" and that she trusted Katy's integrity and commitment unreservedly. Katy loved the way Jean lived her values of "love and belief in humanity, reverence for Life and peoples' growth processes" and highlighted "the resonance we share - for example in groups she often says just what I'm thinking." She also valued Jean's integrity and trustworthiness - eg how she shows responsibility by her willingness to work on herself and "work her programme." They both also felt that they shared a common vision in the value of networking so as to build supportive networks for facilitators and clients and each had a wealth of experience to draw on

*Note: I had intuitively felt that it would be helpful to include these questions as a way of re-affirming their shared commitment and connectedness to each other*

6 iii. Through a process of interviewing each other, we then went on to explore a number of **exceptionally positive moments** in the nearly two years that Prospect Hill has been in existence. One of these was the **BOOK LAUNCH/FIRST BIRTHDAY** which brought diverse people together from far and wide and created many links with the outside world in a spirit of celebration. "People who hadn't seen each other for ages were surprised to bump into each other, hugging....." There were "so many people involved - people that we love - all contributing;" "a real team effort" including well known helping professionals, a book editor and publisher, many recovering people and even biological family members. "It showed how we support people in a respectful way." It also felt as though it was an affirmation of the large "Prospect Hill Family."

Another exceptionally positive experience was the **GAMBLING COURSE** which brought counsellors from many treatment centres together. It showed Jean that she could let go and trust others (especially Katy) to "get on with it and fulfil my dream." It also demonstrated that with patience "anything is possible."

A third example was the **RECOVERY ASSISTANTS COURSE** which was a training and therefore empowering intervention for a very diverse group of trainees, many of whom grew enormously from the process and were subsequently able to find jobs as a result of the training. They felt that the course had been a real contribution to peoples' lives and to the field of recovery, and what's more the course was profitable! The opportunity to run the course had come out of nowhere - Jean and Katy had had to make a quick decision to run with it. By running with it they had learned that "Energy goes where the flow flows".

A theme which emerged repeatedly from the discussion was how Jean and Katy's roles complemented each other - eg Jean attending to the organisational details and Katy more to the macro picture and financial aspects.

6. iv. In exploring what each **valued most about themselves, their work and the organisation when feeling good about it**, the following emerged:

Jean valued her ability to "see addiction and other personal struggles as a response to Life circumstances rather than a diagnosis" and how when clients sense this they seem to feel safe to find ways of changing at a pace that they can handle. She values how she has come to appreciate the slow pace of change in many people and accept that the pace at which people change is beyond her control. "I love my clients and look forward to hearing how they are doing."

Katy valued how her involvement had "helped me overcome my commitment phobia" by providing regularity, commitment and rhythm. She enormously valued how Prospect Hill had provided her with the living structure to grow her "career self," skills and confidence after she had put her career on hold for a long time as a mother involved with her children. She also realised that in the course of her work at Prospect Hill, her holistic way of seeing people had reduced her fear of addiction and created hope by showing how respect and an "allowing attitude" could help dissolve shame and allow healing processes to unfold. She felt less pressure to "do and know all the answers."

6. v. In exploring the **single biggest thing that Prospect Hill had contributed to each of their lives**, Jean valued the sense of **INTERDEPENDENCE** that gave her the ability to earn a living while also offering the freedom to choose *how* to work. For her it was a prized lesson in "interdependence vs independence or codependence."

For Katy Prospect Hill has offered a "committed relationship that is a container and support to grow my working life in a way that is flexible and creative" - making it

possible for her to choose how to work vs the "loss of control" of working for an employer." "I can have responsibility and choice/freedom."

## **7. EMERGING THEMES - LIFE GIVING FORCES**

In distilling themes and forces that give Prospect Hill its Life-blood, the following emerged as central, recurrent values:

*Innovative, sustainable, affordable services that are also profitable*

*Collaboration using mutual strengths and passions - Interdependence*

*Optimising resources by using groups*

*Platform for Growth and empowerment of owners, facilitators and clients*

*Creating supportive networks and bringing diverse people together*

*Resonating with and complementing each other in what we do*

*Trusting each other to get the job done with integrity - shared responsibility and freedom for both of us*

*Holding love, hope and respect for peoples' humanity and growth processes - allowing shame to dissolve*

*Courageous daring to try new things - "energy goes where the Flow flows"*

*Trust that anything's possible if we're patient enough to let the seed germinate*

*Contributing through training*

### ***We want more of:***

*Co-operative relationships with outside recovery and service organisations - including outside of Cape Town and the Western Cape*

*More groups that optimise resources and especially activities that generate a sense of a "Playground of creativity" - art, movement etc*

*Next session - refine the dream - ? around Groups and Collaboration and design a process to actualise it*

***PROSPECT HILL - SECOND MORNING 31/08/2012***

1. We started by reviewing the Life Giving Forces and "What we want more of" from the previous week, with a view to affirming and highlighting themes that created most energy in Jean and Katy. This yielded a list of themes similar to before which they both felt were essential to take forward:

*Creating networks that bring diverse people together collaboratively*  
*A platform for growth and empowerment of clients, facilitators and owners*  
*Trusting each other - integrity, sharing and freedom*  
*Innovative, Sustainable, Equitable, Profitable and Affordable services*  
*Courageous risk-taking*  
*Holding love, hope and respect for peoples' growth processes*  
*Contributing through training*

2. Jean and Katy then spent some time co-creating a **visual image** of their preferred future in the form of a rather moving enactment. Using a wide range of materials they depicted a scene with Jean and Katy setting off into the unknown together, and then separately, but connected. The journey progressed into the unknown depths and expanse of the sea, where they cast their nets, trusting that they could collect enough treasure in the sea which could then be distributed to everyone, including themselves. This unfolded against the backdrop of a Lighthouse and concluded with a (beautiful statue of) a group of people holding hands in a circle surrounded by candles.

3. Having discussed the concept of a **PROVOCATIVE PROPOSITION**, they then spent time creating their own:

*We create environments that foster Discovery, Development and Growth. By recognising and utilising available resources - both the light and the dark - we collaborate to unleash the highest human potential in our clients, colleagues and ourselves.*

After much discussion they both felt that this captured all the elements of what they are about and where they want to go.

#### 4. **PLANNED INITIATIVES - INITIAL IMPACT OF AI PROCESS:**

We then got onto some **Design and Destiny** work with offerings from both Jean and Katy to ensure the actualisation of the Provocative Proposition:

i. Katy has committed to writing a poem that captures the PP and the AI process thus far

She will also rewrite parts of the website using notes from the AI process.

ii. Jean is starting a new "Co-dependency Recovery group with at least 8 new members.

iii. Katy is going to consult with Jean and 2 outside facilitators who work with Adolescents in order to design a creative group programme for parents of adolescent substance abusers. The intention is to have this group running early 2013.

iv. Jean is liaising with Andre L who, in collaboration with Prospect H is going to develop a second phase Recovery Assistants' training course and present the existing RA course in Johannesburg. Together they will also develop a supervision process for RAs.

v. Jean and Katy also committed to finding ways to make space available to offer more training and professional support.

vi. They have agreed to meet once a month to specifically monitor their progress with the delivery of the Provocative Proposition.

## **5. PROGRESS TOWARDS INITIATIVES MENTIONED ABOVE**

I intend to hold another session with Jean and Katy by end November in order to hear what progress is being made on the initiatives mentioned. I can confirm that 3 weeks after our last AI process they have collaborated with a colleague who will run an Adolescent Programme for teenagers who are abusing but not dependent on drugs. They have also put together and advertised a one day training workshop for professionals wanting to upskill themselves on working with Families affected by Addiction, and another one for Helping Professionals on "Who am I when I'm not in my helping role?" I shall also keep inquiring into progress being made during my informal contact with Jean and Katy.

## **6. MY OWN EXPERIENCE OF FACILITATING**

I have been a close observer of Jean and Katy's work in co-creating and growing Prospect Hill. My biggest wish for the process was that it would genuinely support their efforts to build on what they had already achieved at Prospect Hill. For myself I also wanted to experience the power of the basic AI process from a Facilitator perspective.

Judging from their feedback and the proliferation of new projects emerging in the weeks following our AI process, the AI process indeed supported the development of Prospect Hill and the elaboration of services and workshops being offered under the PH banner. This in itself is satisfying, but the most positive aspect of the process was the energy

which I experienced during the process itself. The nature of the process, especially the use of variations on the basic questions, created an uplifting and creatively generative process. To some extent I feel that this was a result of the extremely synergistic, creative relationship between Jean and Katy, something that is fairly rare and generative in and of itself. However, my experience confirms the positive, energising power of the principles such as focusing on the positive and using generative images. (eg The skit which they enacted was genuinely moving). My experience suggests that the principles in action generate a momentum of their own when allowed to flow freely through the process. In this case it made facilitation a joy

Allowing for the fact that I was working with a small, relatively uncomplicated and very creative system - something which is unlikely to happen all the time in AI practice, the experience has affirmed my identification with the AI process and encouraged me to do more of this kind of work.

## **APPENDIX: QUESTIONS**

Questions for Appreciative Inquiry - Prospect Hill Practice

Topic name?

1. What intention or idea originally inspired you to co-create Prospect Hill?
2. What about Jean/Katy made you feel confident of sharing this project with her as your partner?
  - 3.i. Describe 2 or 3 specific events/accomplishments/occasions at P Hill thus far, that left you feeling most satisfied/fulfilled/alive/excited.
  - 3.ii. What was it about these events/accomplishments that made your them such highlights for you? Who was involved?

3.iii. What could you learn or take forward from these highlights that could help grow your vision and your level of satisfaction in this work?

4. Without being humble, what is it that you most value about yourself, your work and the organisation itself when you are feeling good about it?

5. What is the single biggest thing that Prospect Hill has contributed to your life?

6. What is the one core value that sustains you and Prospect Hill during the difficult times? Without this core factor, how would P Hill be different to what it is?

7. What are your 3 wishes for yourselves and the organisation in the next 2 years?