

OVERCOMING INNER DEMONS, MAKING A CHANGE

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BACKGROUND

Client came through Peaceful Solutions founder Maria, who had supported Andy* for some years as he worked to get back on his feet financially after years of drug and alcohol abuse which had led to serious debt problems. Andy is a gifted artist and works as a graphic designer in the advertising industry.

He has struggled to re-establish his art since coming off drugs and continues to work in advertising, although he finds the advertising world increasingly at odds with his value system. He suffers from low self-esteem and lack of confidence and has a strong drive to succeed, as well as fear of ‘failure’ when measured against his high standards of what constitutes ‘success’. As a child Andy was a gifted sportsman, pushed by parents and abused by coaching staff.

Support offered was for three Dialogue Road Map (DRM) facilitators to work with him, with the initial brief to offer DRM listening and lots of empathy. ‘Contract’ with the client was that support would cease if he started using again. With a couple of relapses, Andy remained clean for the entire support period.

LISTENING AND LEARNING

The DRM facilitators found that Andy could initially talk at length without pause; whatever his current story was in each session it was very present for him. From the start he confirmed feeling heard and understood; he found the DRM listening and empathy helpful, and feedback and support were introduced later. Over time he became more comfortable with exploring the feelings and needs associated with his story, the sense of lurching from crisis to crisis lessened, and there was more dialogue about what progress and change looked like both in the past and in the future.

Specific references to his childhood traumas only surfaced occasionally during our sessions, but crises in his life ‘sent him back’ to a sense of failure and judgement familiar when he gave up sport and when he hit rock bottom financially. We talked extensively about blocks to returning to making, exhibiting and selling art. There was a strong underlying need to be creative again.

ASSESSMENT

Facilitators recommended two sessions a week initially, moving to one session a week and less frequent in the final three to four months. The DRM facilitators began by taking it in turns to listen within a single session and as relationships were established took turns to lead, a session at a time. All three facilitators were present for all sessions.

Andy was used to DRM listening having had sessions before, and was open and honest about what was present for him and whether feelings and needs that we identified had ‘landed for him’ and were useful. As the trust between the DRM Facilitators and Andy strengthened, feedback was introduced which helped Andy to see what progress he had made towards meeting his immediate financial and other ‘security’ needs, and to work on strategies for planning and implementing changes.

OUTCOME

The client has been able to gain stability in his life and a real sense of focus, purpose, and composure. He has met his need for connection by finding a partner and is meeting his needs for financial security through a full-time job.

He is also managing to negotiate relationships in the workplace more successfully without running away from difficult situations.

He can envision a time in the future where he will be able to leave advertising and have a fulfilling life as an artist, although he still becomes frustrated when he achieves a major milestone and finds he’s not ‘fixed’ but that there is still work to do!

REMEDY

We learnt that feedback and support sessions were helpful in providing him with a safe space to not only vent his frustrations, but also to unpack his immediate and deeper needs and develop successful strategies for meeting them. Recovery times following crises shortened dramatically during the period. The DRM Facilitators have worked with this client for just over a year and are now working through a process of ending this phase of support.

*Names have been changed and do not relate to any person/s of the same name

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