The Community Healing Workshop: A Final Treatment Phase of AEDP for Couples

By David Mars, PhD

Abstract. This paper describes the nature and purpose of a unique new approach to both teaching the AEDP for Couples method and to assist the couple present on stage in the second day of the workshop to integrate and metaprocess the arc of their therapeutic experience. This integration of AEDP into a large group format of therapists, using the Seven Channels of Experience in I-statements that reflect their internal experience to the couple, gives the couple the experience of being seen, heard and known by a large group of therapists who come to be felt as True Others. The paper describes the three foundations of the Community Healing Workshop: AEDP, Process Oriented Psychology, and the witnessing discipline derived from Authentic Movement. Process Training Language is introduced with its attention to moment-to-moment tracking and “sliding in time” to cultivate the immediacy of present experience that is very useful in generating safety in group processing, metaprocessing and guiding healing portrayals in trauma treatment.

Description of the Community Healing Model:

This article describes the two-day Community Healing Workshop I developed for particular couples who are in the last stage of AEDP for Couples treatment. The unique element of this process is that the couple is live on stage while interacting with a large audience of therapists as the arc of the couple’s transformational journey is shown on video. The purpose briefly is to integrate and stabilize for the couple the transformative process of their treatment and to offer the therapists a deep experience of the AEDP for Couples model (Mars, 2014), using the seven channels of experience to metaprocess both the experience of the couple and the audience.

On the first day of the workshop I teach the theory and practice of the AEDP for Couples model to the audience, without the couple present. The audience learns about the seven channels of experience and how to speak in Process Training Language, which is detailed at the end of this paper. Part of the goal of the first day is to prepare the audience to offer a secure base for the couple when they arrive. I show video clips of early work with the couple whom the audience will meet the next day. These clips illustrate key change moments in the initial sessions and give the audience of therapists opportunities to practice I-statements linked to their somatic experience. This also gives the therapists an exposure to integrating this particular way of perceiving, receiving and expressing in a new way that is applicable to both couple, individual and group psychotherapy. By the time the couple arrives on the second day, a container of safety has been established that is palpably resonant with the secure base and the manner of accessing and expressing
internal experience that I have established in treatment beginning in the first session of AEDP for Couples.

**Three Foundations for the Community Healing Workshop:**

The first foundation is the practice of Authentic Movement in which the skill of witness consciousness (Adler, 1996, 2002; Pallaro, 1999) is cultivated to access deeply embodied tracking of somatic experience. I studied Authentic Movement with Janet Adler for ten years and taught Authentic Movement for eighteen years. This whole-body witnessing is oriented to an individual or a group of Authentic Movement practitioners being held in a deeply respectful and contemplative atmosphere of safety. The movers’ gestures, micro-movements, body attitude (Birdwhistle, 1970), even stillness is closely tracked by the witness or witnesses, whose eyes and all senses are open. Any subtle sounds or breath changes are tracked closely by the eyes-open witness(es), as the mover(s) follow their internal movement impulses with their eyes closed without music. Following the movement period, a spoken witnessing period follows in which the mover speaks first of his or her experience. If invited, the witness then gives a moment-to-moment account of the recall of the experience of witnessing the mover. The witness uses I-statements and “shifts in time” (Mars, 2011, 2014) by speaking of “what happens” in the present-tense, reliving and recounting a coherent narrative of his or her experience of the whole range of the mover’s non-verbal expressions during the entire the movement period, whether it lasted ten minutes or two hours. The language form is specific to the witnesses’ embodied experience and seeks stays clear of positive judgment (praise) or negative judgment. This language form was strongly influenced by John Weir in the form of speech he named “percept language” (Weir, 1975).

The second foundation of the Community Healing Workshop is the Process Oriented Psychology of Arnold Mindell (1985a). Many World Work and Process Work (Mindell, 1985b, 1992, 1995) workshops have been held around the U.S. and the world, seeking to train therapists and to contribute to the healing of interpersonal, cultural and inter-racial wounding. I studied Process Work and more peripherally World Work for a ten-year period. However, there are important differences between the Community Healing Workshop and Mindell’s work —

John Mizelle, a long time Process Work and World Work facilitator and my esteemed past teacher of the work, wrote the following specifically for this paper:

> World Work and Process Work workshops allow significant dysregulated affect, accepting it as an inevitable fact and a frequent starting point. Mindell follows Jung in adopting a teleological view of human development, i.e., that human consciousness moves toward wholeness. He believes that phenomena—signals—that occur outside of the identity of the individual and/or the group often point toward that development, and that, when awareness is directed to such signals, that development is revealed and facilitated. Therefore, Process Work exhibits a wide and deep tolerance for behaviors that are disturbing to the
identity of the person and/or group. It is believed that the disturbing signals will reveal either the wisdom at their core, or their limiting, dysfunctional nature, if given welcome and room to show themselves (Mizelle, 2014 written communication).

In contrast, the Community Healing model works to bring forward transformance drives (Fosha 2008) and regulated core affect and then to moves into adaptive action tendencies (Fosha, 2000), which guide the transformative process forward in a context of deeply held safety. While shadow aspects of self are recognized as being important in AEDP for Couples and in the Community Healing Workshop, the intention is to regulate those dysregulated aspects of experience, in a way that establishes and maintains safety from the “get go”.

World Work allows projection and judgment to build for a significant period of time during workshops to “stir the pot” of amplified emotions in the audience of participants and thus to bring the problems, conflicts and intense energies that are the subject of the day or weekend in a pronounced manner into the foreground.

The Community Healing context works instead to convert projections and judgments even before they are expressed into vulnerable and somatically expressed I-statements of owned experience about the self, rather than projections or positive or negative judgments about the other. Thus we incubate an atmosphere, an expressed intention and a language form that is mindfully expressed as Process Training Language, so each individual’s experience is explicitly owned and worked through rather than being attributed to others as introjects into the field (Mars, 2012, 2013, 2014). If dysregulated affect emerges, as in any session of AEDP for Couples (Mars, 2008, 2011, 2014), the workshop facilitator gently, but firmly intervenes and helps the speaker to convert the projection, blame or judgment into embodied I-statements that express internal experience in any and all of the seven channels of experience. These channels are sensation, emotion, energetic, movement, auditory, visual and imaginal. The intent is for the deeper meaning of what is expressed to be received with a mutual softening of defenses in an atmosphere of slowed-down safety (Fosha, 2000; Mars, 2012, 2013, 2014). In this way attachment bonds are strengthened. World Work and Process Work facilitators occupy a different set of six channels of awareness: proprioceptive, kinesthetic, auditory, visual, relationship and world.

In my experience of Mindell’s work, the increase of awareness comes initially from the amplification of polarization of sides of issues and culturally charged situations, so that they reach an intense crescendo of amplified amplitude of expression, which may then break through to a surprising resolution. By contrast in the Community Healing model, the transformative experience comes through the increase of receptivity to subtlety and nuance in the audience of therapists and in the couple members who are the focus of the Community Healing Workshop. The focus in the Community Healing Workshop is on increasing the capacity and sensitivity for perceiving, receiving and expressing experience.
expressing experience (Craig, 2009a, 2009b), rather than on increasing the amplitude or intensity of the experience.

World Work takes on the difficult challenge of engaging live encounters with participants, who in many cases have never previously met the facilitators or each other prior to the workshop. This stands in sharp contrast to the Community Healing Workshop, because the couple already has an established and secure base with the therapist. The entire course of the work of the couple has been edited from a series of videotaped sessions to feature moments of change over the course of months and up to two years of treatment. The intent of the Community Healing Workshop is to show these change-moments in treatment on a large projection screen with the couple present on stage with an ongoing, open and carefully held conversation between the audience of therapists and the couple about the process of transformation.

Finally, the expressed intention established on the first day of the workshop is for the audience to assist the couple to integrate and metaprocess treatment work that has already shown significant beneficial effects in a private clinical setting. This presents a very different set of conditions than the challenges of the World Work or Process Work Workshops.

The third foundation of the Community Healing Workshop is Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy (AEDP, Fosha, 2000) with its four states of transformational process. The context of AEDP’s focus on empathic attunement, orientation to affective neuroscience and attachment studies and seeking to establish a secure base beginning in the first session (Fosha, 2005) are all deeply held and made palpably explicit in the Community Healing Workshop.

**Four Purposes of the Community Healing Workshop**

First, the Community Healing Workshop serves the couple through metaprocessing and deeply integrating their therapeutic work. Second, the experience gives the therapists in the workshop the opportunity to practice whole-body witnessing through the seven channels of experience directly with a live couple. The therapists present have the experience of being, seen, heard and safely accompanied by me and their colleagues while "stretching" their internal working model in a surprisingly intimate large community setting (Mars, 2011, 2013), by perceiving, receiving and expressing in channels of experience that may be new to them. The experience of making these stretches that exceed the permission-set of the internal working model (Mars, 2011), and thereby expanding the therapist’s self-at-best in the presence of his or her peers has been reported in evaluations and back-channel responses to amplify the capacity of the therapists to go into new arenas of trusting and valuing their own somatic awareness, courage, spontaneity and transformation drives (Fosha, 2008).

The third purpose for the Community Healing Workshop is for videotaped training materials to be produced that provide a medium for therapists and interns who were not
present to learn the AEDP for Couples model by experiencing the workshop after the fact. Each workshop to date has been professionally videotaped by a crew of four videographers. The ethos of the Community Healing Workshops has been to bring the transformational work of each couple not just to the therapists who are physically present on that weekend, but also to interested therapists anywhere in the world through the DVD series or streaming video produced. There is obviously an increased element of exposure for the couple here. How can a couple sustain the fact that their intimate process of treatment and, in fact, their trauma histories would be so exposed to view well beyond the day of the workshop? So far, both the couples who have volunteered for workshops coming up in the future and those who have participated in the Community Healing Workshops in the past have described an overarching desire to serve the healing of other individuals, couples and families. This is a profound extension of transference drives that has helped couple members who have described themselves as shy, or “very private” to feel a new confidence and strength of purpose and ease at sharing in order that their suffering can serve the world and reduce suffering for others.

The fourth purpose of the Community Healing Workshop is to become a microcosmic healing medium that symbolically addresses macrocosmic problems of world-wide dysregulation and hardening of defenses and the resultant reduction of compassion. I find that with couples who have suffered physical, sexual and psychic abuse, as well as neglect and abandonment that interlocked for years with the historical trauma and neglect of his or her marital partner, I perceive them sometimes to have a need to be held by a larger container than I can offer alone. In these cases the “world channel” (Mindell, 1985) of community ideally needs to be addressed, because the attachment injuries and deprivation from which they are recovering are not just theirs or from their families of origin. Those injuries are byproducts of multicultural influences across decades and centuries and from multiple sources around the planet. As just one example, the hardening effects, distortions of the capacity to be attuned, to love and be loved, to affectively self-regulate have been greatly disrupted and complicated through the unspeakable cruelty in two World Wars, plus wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa and more recently again in Asia.

These world events have created wounds that are physical, psychic and relational and have triggered the heightened development of defenses against the experience of loving and being loved. Over generations, these world events have set in motion affect dysregulation and dissociation, and have contributed to addictions to substances and resultant violence and dysregulation in the community and in the home around the globe. These world channel events have changed the character and capacities of millions of couples’ respective lineages in profound ways. In my view the Community Healing Workshop meets that world channel dimension by “inviting the world in”, represented by the audience of therapists who can play a part in making peace with the world through the compassionate help and loving regard of the combined couple and the therapist community present.

In the Community Healing Workshop, there is a “level” aspect of the work that is
profoundly humanizing to the role of being a therapist and to that of being a couple. There have been many reports from therapists of experiencing a relief in the lightening of the load of responsibility of practicing couple therapy. Following the workshops, couples have described witnessing the arc of their healing process as being more palpably real, held more coherently in-a-state-of-flow and accessible by the witnessing of each member of the couple in a state of recognition (Fosha, 2013) both during and after the workshop. Core State, an enhanced condition of open, relaxed spontaneity of knowing in the couple, in the therapist-participants and in me as the facilitator have been evident in the review of the DVD’s produced from the three Community Healing workshops held to date.

There is a sense of an expanded capacity of all the workshop participants to cohere as a group organism to meet and experience self-at-best together that seems to enhance learning and create a collective relaxation of defenses in both the therapists and the couple.

The Issue of Safety

The reader may understandably ask the question, “How can there be sufficient safety for a couple to be physically present on stage as they share their trauma and couple treatment work on video with a very large group of people they have never met?” While nothing in life is guaranteed, there are a number of contributing factors that have generated safety for the couple and for the audience of therapists as well. The first is that deep transformance drives are engaged from the beginning by the couple in their expressed longing to grasp more fully what brought them from their distressed condition when they came into AEDP for Couples treatment, to the place of loving and being loved in which they have so recently arrived. Couples to whom I have selectively offered the Community Healing process have expressed an immediate and enthusiastic “yes” to the opportunity to engage the process. Then over a period of months leading up to the Community Healing workshop, I check with the couple to invite them to be explicit about any questions, anxieties, excitement, dreams, etc. that are “cooking” in the background about the workshop that is coming up. I might say, “How is the imagining of the Community Healing Workshop sitting with you these days?” or “I am wondering if you would update me on the experience of knowing that the Community Healing process is coming up in just two months.” Couples with whom I have explored these questions have been remarkably relaxed and excited about the opportunity to serve their interests in obtaining help in metaprocessing their work. The couples have also been enthusiastic that the therapists will be attending to cultivate and refine their therapeutic skills to work with other couples in treatment. Participating couples so far have each expressed before, during and after the workshop a sense of being honored to receive the skillful attention of so many therapists. In addition, often these couples have already had the experience of coordinated treatment with a team of one or two individual AEDP therapists who have conducted treatment right along with the couple treatment. In this way these couples are already accustomed to a team approach with AEDP and so adding seventy or more therapists to the team is not so foreign! Plus in the coordinated treatment model, DVD’s of AEDP for Couples treatment sessions have already been shared with their individual therapists, thereby normalizing the
sharing of their treatment with clearly beneficial effects.

Another factor in generating safety is the fact that the couple members who have been invited to participate in the Community Healing workshop have been watching their DVDs between each session from the first session of their treatment. They have already cultivated a larger perspective and trust in their treatment process by experiencing and then metaprocessing each session with each other at home via DVD between each live session over the entire course of treatment. This trust is deepened by the fact that the DVDs they witness together at home are videotaped with split screen technology, so both the therapist and the couple are visible on the screen at the same time. Through their own cultivation of tracking channels of experience through viewing ten, twenty or more DVD’s of their couple and trauma treatment work, they have a deep sense of trust in my attuning and accompanying them in our progressively mutual tracking of seven channels of experience.

They also describe their memories of the moment-to-moment process of the specific ways they can see in “DVD retrospective” what they could not perceive at the time of the sessions. They notice in the DVDs that I am scaffolding, tracking and accompanying them step-by-step in each phase of treatment, even if for a period of time at the time of the session, he or she was triggered into an enactment of prior trauma or over-activated into a state of dissociation. Paradoxically perhaps, the repairing of mini-ruptures and mis-attunements in this way has brought the greatest increase in verifiable trust (Mars, 2011) as part of the preparation for the couples presence on stage. The “thickening” of bonds brought about by dysattunement followed by repair is described by Edward Tronick (2015). It may be that the process of these couples viewing their DVDs and witnessing their experiences between sessions of what they see, hear, feel, sense and recognize that generates a greater sense of my being a True Other (Fosha, 2005), not only to each of them as individuals, but to the couple relationship that then holds them more securely in the workshop setting.

The experience for me, as the facilitator and originator of the Community Healing Workshops, is that at each step I intend to move first and foremost from the transformance drive of my longing to be service to the couple. Long before the workshop is scheduled, the couple is “pre-selected” by the spontaneous, natural and repeated experience of my spontaneously “seeing” and “hearing” the couple in the imaginal channel in a future Community Healing Workshop. This imaginal channel of experience cues me up from my unconscious process becoming conscious when I track my imaginal visual and auditory imagery. After months of this experience, I mention the potential of such a workshop to the couple at the moment when one or both individuals describe a sense of disbelief and even distrust of “how far I have come with you in so short a time.” “How can I really trust that we (or more often “you” referring to the partner) are not going to backslide?” I suggest the potential of the workshop when the couple members are already in a stable, yet forward-moving place with each other, in which they are coming in with self-generated repairs of bumps-in-the road that earlier in treatment would have triggered damaging enactments that would have plunged them into the well-worn ditch of their historical
Spreading the Healing Affects Around

Part of what I love about the model of Community Healing is that we are all brought together to witness nothing less than the miracle of the love of two people in the accelerated process of healing the capacity to express love and to receive love. In this synergistic process I derive my deepest confirmation that we heal ourselves one family at a time with a widening circle of health-giving influence. By multiplying this widening-circle effect by each therapist present at the Community Healing Workshop offering their heartfelt, attuned witnessing to the couple, the couple takes in a relieving of historical or even present day unbearable aloneness and a transforming of shame and passivity into confidence and vitality. At the same time, as therapists offer their spoken witnessing of the couple’s transformative process of healing on video and live on the stage, they expand their capacity and confidence to participate in metaprocessing as a whole body expression of empathy with the individuals and couples they treat. Thus, in the Community Healing Workshop, we multiply this widening circle by each therapist present and collectively touch our individual and couple AEDP treatment work. We generate a quantum transformational effect that spreads in ever widening circles like the proverbial pebble thrown into a pond.

When Community Healing Workshops are held in regions in which the channels of experience are not familiar, multiple assistants come to help set the relational and somatic atmosphere for the witnessing of the couple. Before workshops and trainings I have also forwarded the Process Training Language (Mars, Wolk, & Pando-Mars, 2013) as an email attachment to all the participants who have registered (see addendum below). By preparing the atmosphere of safety for the workshop with such a handout, we strengthen the awareness of how to use witnessing language, but more importantly the capacities to become more adept at opening the somatic perception and reception that precedes expression. When our speech is reflective and transparent about our internal experience, we can co-create an atmosphere that “we are all in this together.”

The potential aloneness of “being the only couple on stage” is palpably eased when the first audience member joins the couple with an attuned I-statement that is spontaneously evoked about his or her own relationship. As more dialogue emerges between the couple and the audience connected to change moments in the couple’s videotaped work that we have just experienced together, more drop-down happens into State Two (core affective experience). Then State Three (metaprocessing the experience of transformation) and State Four (relaxed, open knowing, compassion, generosity and coherent and cohesive narrative (Fosha, 2000, 2013) can move into expression. These state shifts in the group of seventy or more therapists become more evident and powerful and are reflected in the couple. The couple is quite acclimated to embodied speech, so being joined by the organismically regulated core affect of so many therapists has to date generated an experience of being deeply met on familiar ground, since these practices of perceiving, receiving and expressing in seven channels of experience is part of every session of
AEDP for Couples. What was originally a stretching of the rules of the internal working model of the couple by feeling, seeing, hearing, sensing and energetically tracking core affective experience, becomes more normative through the audience of therapists accompanying the couple in somatic bottom-up processing. By the couple being affirmed, deeply accompanied and delighted in by the community of therapists, an experience of being received and held surprises the unconscious with receiving affirmation and reflection in the here and now of what was needed in early life.

The embodied experience of support and honoring in the context of the former carefully concealed secrets of abuse and neglect being revealed in an atmosphere of shared productive suffering (Mars, 2014) is profoundly healing. The resulting relief is unique for these couples and in one day, the dialectic of call and response with the audience of therapists “righting the wrongs” of much traumatic isolation and shame. Words are not sufficient to describe the relief that comes from the deep surprise of being believed, met, seen and heard by a whole community of other safe others when one has been rendered invisible, ashamed and unbearably alone in a condition of historical helplessness held in implicit memory.

Transcript from a Recent Community Healing Workshop

On November 15, 2014 Jane and Matt (not their real names) flew from San Francisco to New Jersey to meet at Seton Hall University for the Community Healing Workshop. There Jane and Matt met Diana Fosha, Karen Pando-Mars, plus four AEDP for Couples Assistants. Also present at the workshop as Jane and Matt entered was Anne Marshall, who is Jane’s AEDP individual therapist, who came to help re-create a secure base for Jane and Matt. Seventy therapists from six nations and across the country engaged in the process described above.

On the second day, Jane and Matt are brought up on stage and introduced to the audience of therapists. I begin with a channels of experience meditation to deepen embodied awareness and to freshly engage the therapists in the somatic focus and the Process Training Language. The meditation also has the purpose to help Jane and Matt to focus on slow abdominal breathing and to access each of the seven channels: sensation, emotion, energetic, movement, auditory, visual and imaginal. Matt and Jane speak about the mixture of enthusiasm, optimism and nervousness they feel to be with us in the Community Healing Workshop. Several audience members welcome them and give appreciation for the couple who have come to help facilitate the learning process of AEDP for Couples and to collectively metaprocess their experience of change.

As the audience of therapists views sessions eight through twelve with Jane and Matt, we stop frequently to metaprocess the experience as we go. Audience members and Jane and Matt express tears and joy together throughout the process of moving through the stuck places and from repeated breakthroughs and setbacks. The themes of attunement, disruption and repair are vivid and powerfully evocative. By session twelve it is clear that Matt and Jane have fallen in love with each other and that they have entered into a realm
of intimacy and earned secure attachment with each other. For a more explicit detail of sessions one and session eleven, see Mars (2014).

In the last two hours in the Community Healing Workshop, we address the complexity this new-found intimacy may elicit fears of potential merger and loss of self in a couple that has spent three decades of enduring the distance, disconnection and dorsal vagal responses that are the by-products of Jane and Matt’s interlocking unresolved traumas. A therapist in the audience asks if I have spoken explicitly to Matt and Jane about the issues we see that are becoming apparent about merger and loss of self:

David: Not overtly…we haven’t discussed this, but for me, it is all part of what makes this moment in the session so important. I want us all to just hold awareness of the possibility…we’re talking about individuation versus merger.

Matt: Because I think it’s…I don’t know if it’s the same thing as me having been caught up with other people that I’ve trusted…that I’ve characterized…that I’ve trusted too easily. And it feels like the same thing. And I’m choosing YOU now.

Jane: Honestly, that’s the fear, to be completely truthful…like, oh am I the new Richard (Matt’s former AA oriented therapist) or the new whatever.

Matt: Well the difference is that we signed up for each other. (Leaning toward Jane, smiling warmly)

Th: He’s really making a plea.

Jane: I know.

Th: I get that you don’t want there to be some way that you’ve seen in the past with Matt, where he gets into something that somehow…you perceived him as having lost himself.

Jane: Mmm-hmm

Th: …to people…and lost his own sense of autonomy. And then that makes you really angry and contemptuous toward those people.

Jane: Umm-hmm

Th: In a sense, they took him over.

Jane: Right.

Th: Am I getting that right……..and that you don’t want to take Matt over?

Jane: Right!
Th: You want him...not to lose him into YOU...am I getting that right?

Jane: Mmm-hmm.

Th: *(to Matt)* Not that that’s a risk that you perceive...I don’t know. Do you perceive there’s some risk of losing yourself into Jane in some way that you would lose who YOU are?

Matt: No, no.

Th: Can you tell her about this?

Matt: I think that I.......I don't think that I would lose myself. In fact, if anything, I feel like in the last six months...eight months, I have become more and more myself....and that that’s been part of what has helped us to discover each other more in this setting. *(turns to Jane)* That, you know, in terms of how we’ve been together....how I’ve been with you...how I’ve been at work in this new work that I do...I feel as though who I am is becoming more and more defined. And so, I don’t feel like I’m risking...I mean part of...I know I just said...part of me feels a little ashamed, ‘cause it feels like in some respects I’m like...you asked how do you know that you’re all-in or with Jane and it’s like, it feels similar to...I’m...I’m...I’m jumping both feet in with you and I’m hearing you saying what you need...I’m hearing you characterizing me and how I’ve been with you in our relationship and what...differently...I’m hearing it differently and I know that I’ve said...that I just said that I feel like I’m now just falling into...now trusting YOU but...you know what? I AM. *(laughs).*

Th: That’s the thing.

Matt: I am! And I...and I AM by choice and I...um...and I believe that uh...I believe it’s not necessarily misplaced, my trust.

Th: Yeah...and in fact...if it’s not misplaced, it is instead...to choose her and be all-in with her...

Matt: And I need to work on my neurons. *(smiling warmly)*

Th: It’s true.

Matt: To...to find a different response other than “No, you’re wrong.”

Th: Mmm-hmm..

Matt: Because um...to the extent I’ve been able to entertain the notion that you’re not wrong in this setting...um...I’ve seen that you’re safe.

Th: Wow.
Matt: And that umm…

[00:14:24.23] Th: That’s quite a gesture, Matt. (*waving his hand toward his mid-section*)

Matt: Yeah.

Th: You’re showing her, “You’re safe”…you said it twice…you’re safe. What does that mean? What does your hand show? You’re safe.

Matt: Well come on in…come on in…to ME.

Th: That’s huge…come on in to me. That’s a great statement of your receptivity to the person of Jane being received…so different from that…and getting bogged down or the dog refusing the bath…it’s something about your receiving her today that is so different in your voice resonance…so deep…I didn’t want to interrupt you, but it’s the way you’re speaking so whole-bodied…I trust this voice in you, Matt. I trust your voice. (*turns to Jane*) Do you know what I mean by his body resonance when he’s speaking today? Even in the work that he does…his self is coming more into his work…what is that new work that you’re doing that your self is coming more into?

(End of Clip)

David: Can I have the lights up again please? Ok…so how is this passage for you, Jane and Matt, to be witnessing?

Jane: I still look like I’m not all-in at that time. I think I was all there…I’m not sure. I think still at that time, I was still…up until fairly recently, one foot in…NOT trusting, but not fully there either.

David: And how do you understand that, Jane, based on the fact that you were really urging Matt to be all-in with you?

Jane: Cause I was there before.

David: Yes.

Jane: And I’ve been there…and waiting.

David: Yes.

Jane: And it wasn’t a game…it was never a game…and so…I’ll be ready when I’m ready…(*turns to Matt*) and I wasn’t closed or unempathetic to whatever you were saying or feeling but…this is the time for the truth, right…from where I am.

David: Yes. How about for you Matt?
Matt: I don’t remember quite talking so much. *(blushing)* **[Appreciative laughter from the audience, of Matt’s previous self-effacing comment referring to his view of himself of not knowing or being able to speak of his own experience.]**

David: Because you’re a person who doesn’t find words easily. *(smiling at Matt with pleasure.)*

Matt: I was struck by two things. One is that my conviction and certitude about my experience of letting Jane in, in fact, is the right move. And…

David: How do you know that’s true right now with Jane? Your certitude with her, being all-in with her is the right move…what validates that as true? That you can know in your body as true? Right now with her…

Matt: Um…I don’t know…it’s a…first word that just popped in is symmetry, but it’s a synchrony…a synchronosity (slip) that we have in our conversations recently and

David: Thank you.

Matt: And then I also did notice here…what you just said about yourself…that I wasn’t catching there…in that moment, which was the um…it’s not a wall that you were putting up but it’s a…standing aside still…

Jane: Mmm-hmm.

Matt: And waiting. And I think in a subsequent session or two, we had the opportunity to examine that. *(All laugh)* And…and specifically, my needing to give you the space by accepting that.

David: Wow.

Matt: Why? I trust you now. It doesn’t happen just like that.

David: Thank you. *(turning to the audience of therapists)* Any responses that you have, any embodied experiences that you’re sitting with…Dale?

Dale: I’m also usually not at a loss for words, but for the last half hour, I’ve been sitting…just a streaming energy in my feet and hands, which I’m feeling more intensively now…and I feel there’s a…I’ve received a gift from each of you and from David in this process. There’s some things I want to say of appreciation…where in the tape this morning, Matt, you talked about feeling shame, but you didn’t drop out and away from the shame and you were present and I felt strong in myself as I saw that in you. Just a lot of admiration…man to man…of your kindness and your presence. Seeing that in you brings out the best part in me. So I want to thank you for that. *(Matt beams at Dale, his eyes bright and moist)*
And yesterday, we watched the tape of you and Jane and I struggled because...in seeing the fierce part of you (directed to Jane), that triggered me and I had struggled with liking you (Jane giggles) in that place and it was good for me to have that struggle. And I actually want to thank you for being YOU and showing that, because it gave me time to...although I could, in my...I'm confusing right and left at the moment because of the streaming, but in my intellectual mind I could say I understand where that comes from in you, but I couldn't get it at first. And so your commitment to being genuine...I mean you describe Matt as having integrity, but I see YOU have tremendous integrity. And as I see this part here, um...you know I'm...the Missouri license plate...the “Show Me” state...I'll believe it when I see it...I mean, I like that in you. You know? I want you where the rubber hits the road, where you're real with me and until my body can trust, I don't trust. At least that's I guess, the Jane in me feels that.

Jane: Thank you.

Dale: So I feel like a cheerleader for your integrity and your fierceness.

David: Yes.

Jane: Thank you. (smiling, beaming at Dale)

Dale: And I had an image during lunch that as people talk about the influence of watching the two of you...because there's a parallel process for me, being with the two of you and David...um...seeing how you remind me of a couple I'm struggling with and recognizing in myself and my own marriage when my wife, you know...ok, she's angry 'cause she wants to be with me (chuckles)...and trying not collapse away or respond defensively. So all of those aspects I've had a chance to be with.

So the image I have is like the gifts that people are talking about...I'm trying to share with you now...I am sharing with you now. Um...I feel that there's...what you're providing with your courage is to me, like a rain of blessings and the sense of drops of water on so many of us, reverberating with what you are letting us feel, what I'm feeling in myself...and so many others are feeling as well (voice trembles) and will go home to their spouses and be different, or bring out the best and go back to my office and find a way of um...celebrating the fierceness that you brought, in service of connection. So...

Jane: That's beautifully said. (eyes glistening, brightly lit.)

Dale: Thank you.

David: And will you tell about the beauty you experience in this...in what Dale is saying?

Jane: The validation, because there were so many years that I began not to trust where I was going or whether I was right...his mother was always, you know, pointing out things about me that were unkind or untrue or whatever, and no one was standing up for me and
then I didn’t even know I was married to an alcoholic for 20 years…and then it was worse coming into recovery and I was wrong for not working the program and we were talking about that during lunch. So I…it’s really hard to start…where do you start to try to find yourself…let alone show the person you’re living with, you know.

David: How about you, Matt? What’s your experience here?

Matt: Um…I appreciate Dale, your honoring the integrity in Jane as well and seeing that and…and riding through your own reaction yesterday to her. *(all chuckle)*

David: Can you relate to that part too?

Matt: It’s good, isn’t it? *(all laugh)*

Dale: It’s sorta like surfing and falling off the board, at times.

Matt: We’ve used some beach metaphors…not Normandy…but the waves *(all laugh with tones of empathy and affection).*

David: What is the good in the end…Thank you. Yes… Polly? Sorry…go ahead…thank you for helping me keep track.

Andrea: I had the microphone twice and got cut off twice already.

David: Oh…I appreciate your persistence.

Andrea: Thank you. Hi, I’m Andrea and am extremely grateful to both of you…um…your generosity in showing us your tapes and your generosity in being here and sharing of yourselves with us…I really appreciate it greatly. Jane, I really resonate with your journey to finding yourself and to you know…needing to be seen…that’s a journey that I’ve experienced as well and I want to honor that. Um…and I had a different reaction than Dale to your shame, Matt. I felt very protective of you in the earlier sessions…I felt a tremendous desire to like…you know…tell you that just because you made a mistake doesn’t mean that you’re terrible, you know. But then as I saw you showing up more and more, I felt less of a need to be protective of you, because it seemed like you were really able to take care of yourself and that was really lovely to see.

Matt: I think it was the Andrea in me that was coming out. *(broad grin, bright eyes., joy expressed)*

Andrea: *(laughs)* Thank you!

David: So who really IS next to speak? What’s the truth? Is it Polly now? Ok.

Polly: Something just clicked for me, Jane…when you spoke and you said something about
people standing up for you...feeling stood up for...as I reflect, this whole day, I’ve been so sitting up...so in my uprightness and feeling curious about what that was about...and really like...I cannot sit back today. As you said that, it struck me, this witnessing experience that Esther commented on of being with the young one in you, standing at the chain link fence, watching your father’s truck go by and longing for what you longed for...for so long. I felt so...the justice of myself sitting up and standing with you to see that with you...and I feel so moved to be with you and witnessing that moment with you and validating that that was true. I’m enjoying the experience of standing up with you and for you...I thank you for letting us.

David: (smiling) Thank you Polly. (turning to Jane) A lot of welling up...what’s happening with that big sigh?

Jane: Yeah...I wish I bought stock in Kleenex. No I just...I still see that fence (voice trembles)...

David: Yes...a lot of feeling here...and part of my gratitude, Jane, is that following this workshop, you’ll be working with Diana Fosha, and you will be having a private session with her as a follow-up to this. And what gets evoked here, what gets brought forward, there is a place to go on the way to keep the connection to what’s still needing attention and support to move through. (Jane nods and self soothes.) [I made a from-the hip-decision here to bypass processing the trauma memory of the six years “behind the fence” as a six to eleven year old in the workshop setting, feeling the greater safety for Jane to work that out dyadically with Diana.] Another person here?

Jack: Hi, I’m Jack.

David: Hi. (smiling and nodding)

Jack: I had the honor of having lunch with Jane and Matt and um...one of the things that I want to come back to...we discussed a number of things, but I wanted to bring up something, because I think there are probably some other witnesses here who could be helpful...and that is...when I spoke about how I ran the family treatment part of a alcohol treatment program once and it was so difficult for couples who were going through a process of recovery when one person was going to AA and the whole emphasis was on their recovery and very little on the couple. In fact, I think it really created more of a wedge in the couple and a very painful disconnection and I think that it’s something that probably a lot of couples experience and when we were speaking about it, it seemed like this was something important for you to know that you’re not alone in that experience...that recovery is a very painful process for couples. So I’m bringing that up in case other people have witnessed that as well.

David: Thank you Jack. (nodding, pausing, scanning the audience of therapists) How about one more comment...I guess we’ll have two.
Andrea: It’s me again…I have a question that’s burning that I have to ask Matt. In addition to Jane, to your persistence and allowing that to come forward and that helping the whole process of you guys connecting…at the beginning, I felt the same way as you did about the shame that you were feeling at the beginning of not being able to do what it is that you wanted to do as a husband. Help me understand how you got from one place to the other…from feeling so ashamed and going into that place of not feeling good about yourself to a place where you could stand up for yourself and speak from confidence and love and compassion…was it something in particular that David did as a therapist or something, you know, that your wife said to you?

Matt: There’s the long answer and there’s this…short answer, I think is probably the truest…is that in being able to look at the sessions again on DVD and watch them…that dynamic enabled both of us, I’ll speak for me…to step back and look at the interaction that I had experienced initially from a more detached place. I saw the shame I was expressing and experiencing in that moment and I realized that it didn’t last forever. So what I told myself was, you know what? Hang with it, Matt…just hang with it and to bring you into, David. David’s got a tremendous way of inviting the conversation to continue along the most productive path and so he’d say, Matt, can you look at Jane when you’re saying that? In a kind way and so I was seeing myself experiencing shame before even noticing it and labeling it. So, that experience of seeing the video kind of gave me a check for next time, like what was said at lunch…that was kind of self-monitoring and so the next time it came up, and I was feeling it…I felt it…and I stayed with it and um…and it was a kind of trust…um…but it kind of harkens back to that persistence that we both share that this is not going to take me off track.

David: Yes. Thank you. Anybody else have anything else that’s cooking? Steve?

Steve: Wow…I feel so filled up. I have an image of many ribbons in the sky…not just for your love…what you’ve offered us today is going to have so many ripples…it’s going to help so many people…so I just acknowledge you for your heroism…it’s just truly inspiring.

David: (nodding) In back of you is Maria.

Maria: Yeah…it’s hard for me to speak but …last week I had a couple and it was so similar, but even more traumatic right now and whatever…but it’s so similar and I told them, before I had met you two…I didn’t know what was going to happen. I said, I’m going to bring you in here with me. I didn’t know in what way…and I am so hopeful that what you have showed me today and to have witnessed your work, David, with you and the whole process…I really hope I can bring it back to them next week…and that they will show up, both of them. Everything that you have gone through is so similar…so thank you so much. And they have three little kids.

David: Yes…thank you. Yes. So I just want to make a comment. How about if we go maybe another 10 minutes with this process with Mat and Jane? Then we’re going to wrap up our time with Matt and Jane at that point, and then we’re going to have a metaprocessing
period for all of us. The theme will be along the lines of how can we take this home. How do we ensure that it takes root? How do we really do that successfully and maintain that connection with the work. (pause, listening, looking for an audience response and receiving the nodding of many heads) Thank you.

AUDIENCE COMMENT: I just wanted to ask you all…I'm so curious about what your experience of being in therapy with David has been like. I feel this sense of safety in your relationship together. I actually have enjoyed seeing from the first session all the way to the end, the comfort that you all feel with each other. I see you up there now and you seem like…David’s sort of beaming and so incredibly proud, but there’s also this sense that you guys are all grown up, you know? I mean that in like the most, warmest sense I can…being a child myself (group laughs warmly). I guess I wonder…would love to learn more about how this particular experience in therapy and your experience with this therapist has moved you and guided you to this process of transformation.

Jane: I’m going to let you go first again.

Matt: Well my experience of this time together in couple therapy with David has been…we’ve each, as we’ve said, done individual work coming into this couple work and I think that was a necessary condition for us to be able to do the kind of work we’ve done with David and be ready for this. There’s been a readiness that was hard earned…has been hard earned. And…and I’ve shared this with you David. David’s got a way of being with us…I’ve noticed David has a way of being with us (group laughs at his self-correction back to making an I statement) where I’ve noticed you be patient when I’m waiting to find the right words to say. I’ve noticed you prod when I’ve needed to be prodded. I’ve noticed you call us each, in gentle ways, on ways that we’re expressing ourselves that wouldn’t be productive. You listen…I’ve heard you listen to the words that we use…and the words that we’re not using. The other piece that’s tremendous about this process is that I think we get to work on a little bit more is to find a way to say it in the positive…say it in the affirmative…because I’m understanding that’s overriding some of this other stuff and THAT’S deep healing…healing-for-the rest-of-time kind of healing. And that’s the only way I want to spend my time…my remaining heartbeats here. And I also, since I’ve got the microphone in my hand…I want to recognize…I’m glad you invited Anne (Jane’s individual therapist who also flew out to accompany the process with Matt and Jane) to say something…I want to recognize you, Anne, for the work that you and Jane have done together. And for the one session that you invited me in, not for couple therapy, but just to be an interpreter. You and David…you, are our angels. And (to the audience) you ALL are angels. And I’m sorry for the connotation there, but my experience of this session is that the openness…the truth that we’re living together, the witnessing that we’re providing for each other. Steve, as you’ve described the ripples and others have shared with me…the ripples of healing that are going to happen as a result of this...these are moments of heaven for me. And…we get to live them in the living years. And there’s more to it…there’s more of the living years left and that’s so hopeful. And so that’s what it’s been for me.

David: Wow.
Jane: How am I going to top that? *(group laughs with affection, empathy)* Well, I bought a seesaw right? And that meant two things...it's a seesaw that you see in a park...it's not just a seesaw...it's a long story, but the short of it is about balance and joy. *(sighs, voice trembles)* And I'm only inviting the people I like to come play on my seesaw...cause life is too short...not to be judgmental.

David: *(pause, letting it sink in)* Thank you. Wow...

AUDIENCE COMMENT: A couple of comments...first of all today, your fantasy you mentioned earlier David of having a circus...I want to thank you for not being the center ring...or even the ring leader...that made the circus a lot more meaningful, because you certainly could've done that and had a right to but...Matt and Jane, I want to stand not so much for you, but with you and the image I have is the last scene of Les Mis...that always brings me to tears. When the people stand together, redeemed, alive, departed...I wasn't going to share this, but when you mention the heavenly...that's a sacred moment to me, because it's a manifestation of transformations through wars, through abuse of children, through lives and through death and through illness...everybody stands and they march together, waving the banner...saying, we're going to go on...we're going to keep this going and all that we have through transformation...and it was transformation, not just the 15th...if we had only seen the 15th session, this place of hope, I call my hope within, would not be full because...Yesterday I came very depleted *(pauses, sighs)*...but today I'm full again and so I stand with you and I know we do, too...to march together to a new future and if those sessions had been edited like you wanted, *[referring to a disruption earlier in the day caused by my mistakenly sharing a raw, out-of-sequence video clip that took Jane off guard by seeing and feeling how dysregulated she was in that particular session]* I wouldn't be filled. Because the evidence of transformation would not be there...but it is...and the two of you stand in the place Jean Val Jean for me before all of us in that line up marching forward...thank you.

David: Wow...powerful. *(pause...looking into the audience)* Thank you.

Karen P-M: I'm just thinking of that place of wanting that piece edited out and I can understand totally wanting to end in one place, but the buoyancy of seeing that place, from what we've seen in the transformation...and then to watch that moment where there's this settling and understanding of where statements can just jump out...and like back to Esther's comment about making that hard choice, and then just also holding what I...I've just been on the edge of my seat with tears and chills and filled...and just so, so moved, that it's all the fabric...it's all one for me, actually at this point and I don't hold any more special than the other, because I see you two here. I'm so proud. And...I think my marriage is going to be even more interesting after this, too. *(all laugh)*

David: I do too! Thanks baby! *(big smile to his partner Karen in the front row)* This is good! *(all laugh again)*

Mark: My name is Mark and I'm totally awestruck by your work David and by the work you
guys have done…it’s just been amazing to watch and when you guys look at each other now…and you smile at each other…I just light up in my heart…to see the growth you’ve made, the commitment to your marriage…the commitment to your kids…it’s just lovely. And I think…in terms of my own work, I’ve been…I sort of moved away from couples work over the past year or two and I think this is really…you guys will be in my office now…giving me that energy and really giving me that hope, so you’ve done a tremendous thing coming here.

David: Thank you Mark. (smiling, nodding)

AUDIENCE COMMENT: I have learned so much from the two of you about love…these two days… and I’m very grateful and I, too, have been watching little gestures… one in particular I noticed when you were sitting next to each other on stage upstairs and Jane, your foot rubbed up against Matt’s leg and I watched the expression between the two of you… your eyes met and you looked at each other, and it was very, very sweet and there’s a tremendous sweetness I feel in your relationship. I also wanted to comment on…I’ve been to other workshops where clients have come and done work and there’s something different about the way that this experience has been than any other experience I’ve had watching the work. Because you’re up there as equals…you’re not the clients on stage that are being looked at…you’re teaching us and you’re part of us and we’re learning from you and there’s a humanity to the way in AEDP we treat our clients as fellow humans that we’re on a path with, rather than as this artificial boundary, which I just haven’t seen today and it’s wonderful to see. So thank you.

David: Thank you. So on that note, I want to begin to bring…do you want to say something Sandy?

Sandy: As we are all sharing our tears together, I was thinking…what are those tears? So I think of the six-year-old Jane…meeting the six-year-old Matt as well and the teenager Jane, the teenager Matt…and the six year olds and teenagers in all of us…our longing to be noticed…a longing to be seen…a longing to be nurtured…and watching you guys grow…the mid-wife that Diana talked about the first day…as the mid-wives and watching you guys grow and watching David nurture you guys and watching how Jane stood up for herself and validated herself. And Matt stepped up to the plate…and then seeing how David…the delight in you…like the proud mid-wife, the proud parent…look at my son! Look what he did! (group laughs, beaming) I think I’m amongst AEDP therapists and I’m proud to call you guys my colleagues…I’m proud to call myself an AEDP therapist (voice trembles)…I appreciate the power of reparation…one of the first things that Jane said, when you first came on stage this morning was…”I guess it’s not really a pleasure to be here,” because of what brought you guys here…yet, you guys have made so much an impact on all of us. And the power is going to transcend. And being grateful is not enough to describe where I’m coming from…where how you have built me up…builds the six year old in me and the teenager in me…up…and the clients that I will be seeing…thank you.

David: Thank you Sandy.
Jane: I do just want to say that people…it’s like at a funeral…oh hey, how ya doing? Oh good to see you! Then you stop…does anybody see you? It’s not good…but it is good to see you…so there’s a kind of weird separation and that’s kind of what I was going with, in a way…it is a pleasure to be here…it is a pleasure to be here, even under the circumstances of how we got here. And we’re just like everyone else that doesn’t talk about it. You all know. People don’t talk about and hopefully that’ll change cause you guys will all go out and start changing it.

David: (smiling, nodding to Jane) Is there anything in closing Matt that you want to say, in wrapping up your time here with us? (group laughs, beams at Matt) Just checkin’.

Matt: I don’t know what else to say, really. Thank you.

David: Alright…there we are…how about if we just all stand to be with Matt and Jane as they’re going on to their next step of their evening.

AUDIENCE COMMENT: Could we bow to them?

David: Let’s do! (All bow)

Some Results of the Community Healing Model

The morning after the workshop, I asked Jane and Matt about their experience of the six hours of metaprocessing of their therapeutic process with the audience of therapists. Matt went silent for a short while, then he grinned broadly and said, beaming at me, “The best description I can come up with is that I feel little bits of heaven happen all through the day.” Jane smiled broadly with a sense of comfort and happiness expressed in Matt’s words, “I couldn’t say it better myself!” At six weeks and again at nine months later in follow-up sessions, both Jane and Matt described and showed themselves to be very much in love and in a stable state of inspired contentment. They describe how much fell into place that has stays in place that is in sharp contrast to the state of the anxious disorientation preceding the Community Healing Workshop that are the tremulous affects of being in a new and unfamiliar place following a series of transformative shifts. As described earlier in this paper, this stabilizing integration of quantum change is one of the four purposes of the Community Healing Workshop.

The reports of the other four couples following Community Healing Workshops have indicated that they gained the felt experience of intensified confidence and wellbeing through the process. Couples also show signs of enhanced earned security of attachment (Roisman, G.I., et.al. 2002; Lamagna & Gleiser, 2007; Fosha 2009a). The changes have been shown in more coherent and cohesive descriptions of self and of the life of the partner and in the clearly increased harmony and confidence in the couples’ dynamics both within and between follow-up sessions. The four couples who have engaged in the Community Healing Workshop to date have emerged with a sense of feeling lighter, more met and at-one with his or her partner and with the audience of

Addendum

Process Training Language for the AEDP for Couples

Community Healing Workshop

The purpose of Process Training Language is to engender safety, connection and intimacy as we share our experiences throughout the workshop and in working with clients and especially couples. Through these ways of generating more conscious and “vulnerably owned” communication, we aim to reduce to a minimum the tendency of social speech to evaluate, judge and interpret.

Although using this language may feel awkward or unfamiliar at first, I encourage you to try it on. My experience is that this method of communicating is highly effective at creating access to the richness of “bottom-up” experience that lies beneath our social habits of interaction and provides a means to give witnessing that is more deeply received and taken in. This way of accessing somatically constructs new experiences, which change the brain productively. These skills apply to our intimate relationships, and to expanding the capacities of therapists and couples to connect safely and more deeply within the self and one to another.

Key Points:

Speak in “I” language.

Social Speech Example: During the morning of the workshop, a member of the audience of therapists wants to give support to the couple who has just done some moving work in the live session. “You are so good at saying what you feel. You really know how to stay with your partner and reflect each other in a great way.”

While this statement is “positive” and generous, it is also an evaluation, and can only leave the couple members with the option to accept this “praise” as true about themselves, or to reject what the witness is saying, depending on how they judged themselves. Both options take them out of core affective experience.

An Alternative: “I feel so humble, as I see you with your partner. As I hear you make statements that reflect her, I feel myself relax into a deepening of my sense of trusting you myself. I feel inspired”

With this statement, the couple members are not invited to agree nor disagree with the witness’s comment, because the witness is speaking solely of his/her own experience. The couple members are held on level footing with the therapist who is speaking, and are free to take in this reflection and explore their response to having touched-in with the
therapist who speaks in this way.

**Use present tense.**

This one can be a little bit of a mind-boggler, but it’s worth it! This part of the language comes out of the Authentic Movement tradition. Here we can bring forward the intention to activate the portions of the brain and the body that experience in the present moment, even if that moment is brought forward as a memory from the past. This brings greater aliveness and intimacy into the sharing.

Social Speech Example: During a moment when a participant shares with the whole group, “I had a really hard time earlier in the workshop in staying present. I just wasn’t getting it and I touched into some old shame I had about being deficient.”

This is a vulnerable share, and certainly leaves room for empathy and contact. However, speaking (and tracking the body) in the present creates the opportunity for everyone in the room to come into the experience with the speaker. When we speak in the present, like we would when sharing a dream, we invite others into our immediate embodied experience.

An alternative: “From the first moments in the workshop this morning, I find myself struggling to feel as though I get this work. I feel flooded and confused a lot. I feel myself contracting…as if I should know all of this already, even though I know that a lot of this feels really new to me.”

Also: “As I slide back in time to when this therapy session begins, I am struggling to get the experience freshly with an open mind. Now I feel relieved that I am finally being in the moment.”

Also: “I’m imagining I am sitting in the therapist chair (where David is sitting) and I realize I have no idea what to do. I’m totally stumped and feel this wave of anxiety rising right up from my belly to my heart. I get this same anxiety in couples sessions in my office.”

**Speak from Bodily Experience. (Seven Channels of Experience practice)**

Using David Mars’ Seven Channels of Experience: Sensation, Emotion, Energetic, Movement, Auditory, Visual and Imaginal, notice, identify and share from your immediate experience in “I statements”. (See the Seven Channels attached below if you want more detail.)

Social Speech Example: In dyads reflecting about the experience of seeing the videotaped trauma treatment session in the morning, “I really agree with what is happening in the session. It’s like there’s a beauty in how effective this is.”

An Alternative: “As I hear David’s voice quality (auditory channel) I feel a speaking that somehow gets to my heart (energetic and/or sensation channel).
Also: “I’m actually aware of heat (sensation channel) in my heart. This heat feels like it carries a kind of expanding energy (energetic channel”) that moves outward (movement channel).”

Also: “I feel appreciation (emotion) for how the couple meets each other in this part of the session. I hear something telling me (auditory/imaginal channel) that there is something real here.”

Also: “I feel a bittersweet feeling…happy and at the same time shrinking away from you (combined emotion and movement channels) as I say this out loud.”

Rather than talking about evaluation and thinking, the conversation shifts into a vulnerability of inner reflection that reveals how both people are relating to an experience of stretching beyond the habitual that is “edgy”.

**Generic Wording (Tactical Defenses): It, That, They, We, & You versus I**

Social Speech Example: During a large group sharing on the day before the couple arrives: “It seems like we all want to help our patients…when you just ache with how much you can feel their struggle and want to be of help. It’s one of the beautiful and challenging things about AEDP.”

While this person is in touch with some very meaningful experience, she is subtly distancing herself from the immediacy of her experience by using the ingrained social speech of “you”, “we”, “that” and “it” instead of “I”. She is also blurring into attributing her experience to the whole group, which may or may not be true for other members.

An Alternative: “I’m aware of how much I want to help my patients, and I feel this ache in my heart for how much I feel so transparent in this work. I’m opening in new ways here today. I am grateful to be feeling so much compassion. I am also a bit over my comfort level about all of this.”

Also: “I feel confused and stuck in my head with all this language stuff. I feel restricted from being spontaneous and I just want to say what I want to say the way I speak! This feels a bit too-much-all-at-once to me”

**“The Way I Feel You in Me”**

We have the opportunity in the workshop to “dream into” being the therapist, the male partner, the female partner and the therapist. Rather than talking about them, the workshop participant feels into how each person is experiencing the other “within” him or herself. This is going beyond empathy and toward unitive experience (Adler, 2002). This is experiencing one’s self clearly and explicitly experiencing the intersubjective somatic field shared with another or others. Some examples:
“The therapist in me feels…(this provides a way for the witness to step into his experience in the context of the therapist )…the courage to be vulnerable and confident at the same time.”

“As I put myself in the shoes of __________ who just took this stretch just now, I am noticing that I feel so free to speak the truth of what I am saying…kind of experimentally and yet with what feels true to me.”

“As I hear you say __________, the therapist in me feels a little contracted and yet determined to trust impulse in the moment.”

“As (female partner’s name) I am aware of my eyes gleaming in response to being recognized by my partner reaching out and touching my hand.”

The above is a brief introduction to these ways of perceiving, receiving and expressing in the AEDP Process Training model.* I hope you will find yourself playing with going deeper into accessing and expressing new experiences with fresh reflections to go with them during the workshop. These are all ways to bring forward stretches of bottom-up experience into your work with individuals and couples and your somatic connection to your self and anyone else with whom you communicate.

© 2013 Written by Jessica Wolk-Benson, MFT in collaboration with David Mars, Ph.D. and Karen Pando-Mars, MFT.*

* The Process Training model and the Channels of Experience have been developed by David Mars, Ph.D., AEDP Senior Faculty member.

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