

Chapter 14

Mindfulness and the Generative Perspective: A Dialogue/Virtuous Circle



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This chapter addresses a previous unexplored relationship between mindfulness and generative dialogue. Following Kabat-Zinn (2007) and Thich Nhat Hanh (2020), I understand mindfulness to be a space of full attention and dialogic connection with one's self and with others. The generative perspective and practice invite participation in a process of creative work with and in dialogue with the persons or groups who come for a consultation to deal with problems, conflicts, or crises. The process is geared to expanding the resources and possibilities that enable transformations and the construction of viable and sustainable futures. Full attention and presence are inherent to this dialogic process, and discernment is what holds together the generative exercise. In that, dialogic process is akin to mindfulness.

Regarding the relationship between dialogue and generative processes, Kabat-Zinn points out that dialogue can be understood as an external correlate to full attention to all the voices that enter into our mental space at the present moment insofar as we are able to leave behind pre-judgments to listen, feel, and know everything that emerges in dialogue. Like in meditation, in generative dialogue we are completely open and receptive to the encounter with others. At stake is observing, listening, and discerning and recognizing ideas, thoughts, and feelings with a spirit of investigation and compassion. Like in mediation and mindfulness practices, we are open to everything that appears. We heed it without correcting it, without censoring or rejecting it. A greater intelligence emerges from this attitude, an intelligence that resides in *the group*, in relationships. No single person is at the center, and that openness makes way for greater collective understanding.

In his writings on mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn asserts that it is essential to heed how we relate to others. Generative dialogue and like practices are based on relationships of listening, participating, and respecting and being listened to, seen, respected, and recognized. Mindfulness is an inner gesture that enables our heart and mind,

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considered a seamless whole, to become aware of the full spectrum of a present moment just as it is, accepting everything that happens simply because it is happening. Similarly, in generative dialogue we refer to that attitude as full awareness and presence in the relational field (Fried Schnitman 2000, 2002a, b; McNamee 2015a, b; Morales 2020, 2020b, Chap. 11 in this volume).

The word dialogue is derived from the Greek *dia* (through); it refers to a conversation between persons (Kabat-Zinn 2007). The quality of the relational space is key to openness, to allowing for the new to emerge. Quality dialogue is what makes the shared undertaking that is dialogue more creative and productive.

Bohm (1996) also recalls the root of the word dialogue and relates it to the co-creation of meanings through – and between – a given number of interlocutors. He understands that communication is not just a tie for the conveyance of information but also a constructive process. While dialogue may rest on communication and language, it exceeds them.

The notion of dialogue is, today, central to a wide range of theories and practices in the human sciences. Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin developed the notion of “dialogism.” His critique of the monologization of the human experience in the formulations of social sciences, linguistics, psychology, political theory, and the humanities was what launched those disciplines in new directions that take into account the relational, dialogic, incomplete, open, and heterogeneous nature of social relations (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Morson and Emerson 1990).

Bakhtin envisions communication as a relationship between people and dialogue as interpersonal-communication and reciprocal tie: one can relate to another person dialogically. In his early work, he refers to embodied verbal communication between people making a distinction between statements and utterances, pointing that utterances are relational; they are units of speech and are produced and have meaning in reciprocal relationships between people; they are shaped when one participant addresses other participants in a dialogue. People construct utterances in a specific relationship in the here and now of a conversation with others; the context and moment are part of the utterance, itself part of the dialogic process. Fellow participants, the moment, the specific situation, and the past and anticipated responses are constitutive elements of the utterance, understood, then, to be constructed in a relationship. At stake in a dialogue of utterances is active addressivity and active understanding. In a dialogue there are, by definition, uncertainties, creativity, and emergent processes. The other(s) could be another person or one’s self. That focus on presence, on the here and now and what it opens up, is part and parcel of mindfulness as well.

From this generative relational perspective, dialogues and relationships are part of what constitutes us as human beings (Bruner 1986; Gergen 1994–2009; Shotter 1993; Stern 1977; Trevarthen 1979; Vygotsky 1962).

Looking to Bakhtin, the generative perspective includes the professional as an active participant in the relational field. The encounter can open up novel possibilities in the relationship to one’s self, to others, and to one’s circumstances. The professional must be aware of the process of relating, to what emerges in the

dialogue – and in that her practice is like mindfulness understood as an open and creative encounter with one’s self and with others.

But the professional must also be aware of the multiple processes that ensue, of her relationship to herself, to the clients, and to the process, in a fluid and creative context. Again, what is required is *mindful* presence and attention.

Bakhtin’s dialogism; the new paradigms (Fried Schnitman and Schnitman 2002) including Morin’s work on complexity, second-order cybernetics, and complex systems dynamics; and relational social constructionism (Gergen 2009) inform how the generative perspective (Fried Schnitman 2002b) understands the dialogic relationship between professionals and clients.

The term “new paradigms” is a synthetic and convenient way to refer to the changes that scientific theory and practice have undergone in the last 50 years. The notion of new paradigms brings to mind Ilya Prigogine and his work on self-organization, chaos, and temporal irreversibility (Prigogine and Stengers 1984); Edgar Morin (2000) and the paradigm of complexity; as well as the emphasis on social construction and the inclusion of all participants proposed by Heinz von Foerster (1984), Jerome Bruner (1986), and Kenneth Gergen (2009), among others.

From this perspective, and with openness to the new, to the unexpected, the world itself is an emerging event. Creativity is always real, always going on, in response to circumstances, to particular events at particular times; emerging generative processes reorient us toward an ecology of creation.

Co-constructivism and constructionism bring forth new forms of consciousness and introduce new conceptions and practices. Both concur through the rejection of the subject-object dualism and the related presumption that knowledge is nothing more than an accurate representation of the world. World construction, like scientific and cultural knowledge, takes place within forms of relationships.

From the constructivist perspective (von Foerster 1984) comes the notion of self-organization and reflexivity. The process of observation, the observation itself, and the construction of the observer are a single entity that works for the emergence of selves and relationships as parts and products of the very processes that construct and reconstruct them.

Constructionism expands this perspective; it views communication and social coordination as formative processes in which our social worlds and selves are created in patterns of social interaction. Constructionism places emphasis on how we, collectively, as interlocutors with each other, participate in the creation of our social worlds, that is, of the events and objects in which we find ourselves.

Unlike the perspective that affirms that words have meanings because they represent things that exist either out there in an objective world or in the minds of their users, constructivist and constructionist perspectives heed words’ formative function and relationships and their inseparability from generative human actions.

This creative and emergent dialogical and relational turn in many disciplines and practices fosters virtuous interactions between mindfulness and generative dialogues. It provides clients and professionals – and the processes they engage in – with important foundations and tools, which we will explore later in this chapter.

Kabat-Zinn (2007) asserts that full attention and discernment – that is, mindfulness – teach us to see, hear, feel, and sense the existence of endless nuances, of diversity. In judgment and pre-judgment, on the other hand, we cling to knowledge outside of or prior to a dialogue, in a stance not conducive to emerging processes or new knowledges, but rather bent on seeking confirmation of the already known. Work with dialogue eschews normative and expert models to work toward the construction of new knowledge that is localized and specific to each circumstance – to each time and space – knowledge that includes the joint production of participants (Fried Schnitman 2002b).

Kabat-Zinn also points out that “wise discernment” helps us to discover multiple intermediate possibilities and to navigate them adroitly. Contrary to what many may believe, the more attention we pay to the gradations of things, the clearer our mind becomes, and that is worth bearing in mind when we explore more closely generative dialogue, full attention to and presence in the relational process, and discernment as what, together, enable us to register emerging processes and generative possibilities in the specific context of each dialogue.

The generative perspective focuses on registering resources so subtle that they verge on the imperceptible. It heeds emerging events that enable participants to discern novel situations and to construct innovative moments and possibilities with generative potential for themselves, their relationships, and their circumstances and helps them find the resources to change those relationships and circumstances. The generative focus fosters keener register of the possibilities that might enable participants to distinguish those possibilities and to find options and make choices. At stake is the ability of persons in dialogue to discern and expand their register beyond the problem that initially sparked the consultation. In so doing, they are able to address as well other aspects of themselves and their relationships and other resources and possibilities.

As we shall see shortly, including other options ushers into generative processes conducive to transformations and to the construction of viable and sustainable futures.

Mindfulness and generative dialogues help us hone our ability to detect differences between events and circumstances that ensue very close to one another, almost at the same time, and that could go unnoticed if those who experience them are not duly trained. That enhanced perception increases our ability for sustained engagement with richer perspectives and dialogues, thus enabling us to create, to innovate and expand, existing resources. At stake is registering subtle differences and – as generative dialogue proposes – heightening our ability to recognize the different, the novel, the emerging, that which is taking place in the present. This is what enables people to find alternatives to transform themselves, their circumstances, and their relationships, to engage in better dialogues with themselves and with others, to increase awareness and wisdom, and to lead fuller and more mindful lives in the groups of which they form part.

14.1 The Tie Between Mindfulness and Generativity

Discernment that heightens attention and the creativity and productivity part and parcel of dialogue go hand in hand in generative processes. Implicit to generative moments and creativity is the active and inclusive participation of those engaged in the process.

Mindfulness and generative dialogues are not a technique, but rather processes based on a way of existing in relation to others and to oneself ourselves in specific contexts.

The greater our focus on relational mindfulness, the closer we get to the generative perspective. Mindfulness becomes explicitly dialogic insofar as the focus is on relationships to one's self and to others, to the environment. We are *interbeings*, a concept developed early by socially engaged Buddhism that refers to our being and becoming with others immersed in relationships to one another in a multifaceted, interdependent, and interwoven world. Dialogue forms part of every dimension of our existence (Thich Nhat Hanh 2020).

Relational mindfulness has been described as an embodied, participatory, and committed form of meditation aimed at discernment (wisdom) through practices that show us to be inter-beings-in-moment-to-moment engagement with others. At stake is being present in a multiplicity of relationship. Relational mindfulness expands the focus of presence to include the self, the other, the relationship, the community, and the social and natural ecology, including politics. Human and natural existence is engaged in its interdependency, its context and time. At every moment of our life and our being, from the very beginning to the very end, there are relationships and interchanges. Interbeing means fully engaged mindfulness.

The world inside is no less relational or dialogic than the world outside. We dialogue with others and with different aspects of ourselves. We relate mindfully with our heart and mind as a whole, attending to suffering and pain with compassion and an eye toward transformation. Any relationship deserves attention, as do the circumstances that make transformation possible. At stake is an active process of generating wisdom, embodied knowledge of a different way of being, of relating, and of proceeding through life.

Human connectedness implies a multiplicity of meaningful relationships, that is, relationships where meaning emerges in a crisscrossing of dialogic relationships. This is a world with others, a world in community. Relational responsibility is part of mindfulness.

Nobody is alone. We cannot escape the implications and consequences of our actions in our relationships with others.

Awareness of interbeing, of being-in-relationship, heightens our capacity to participate in dialogic relationships, helps us to enrich our relational bonds, and enhances the quality of our attention and care to the processes of relating.

14.2 Generative Perspectives and Practices: Dialogue and Relational Mindfulness

As practitioners, we use mindfulness relationally in the context of generative dialogue and its implementation in generative practices such as therapy; conflict and crisis mediation in families, communities, and other contexts; organizational consultation and development; peace work; coaching; and education, among others.¹ These future-oriented approaches are dialogical in nature. They place key emphasis on the ability of the participants in the dialogue to be active as they respond creatively and innovatively to what emerges in the process. Through dialogue and joint action, professionals and clients work together to address unresolved and difficult problems and challenges, to assess and co-create emergent resources, and to craft and implement new possibilities, alternative futures, and novel ways of living. The clients' life challenges and difficult situations are addressed for the sake of transformation.

From the perspective of generativity, professional practices foster dialogic processes, creativity, co-participation, and complex and nonlinear approaches. The aim is to involve multiple voices, to question limitations and assumptions so that clients are able to enrich their possibilities and re-authorize and re-signify their lives (Fried Schnitman 2013).

The focus on the present moment, and not on pre-knowledges, helps professionals and clients to mindfully discern and recognize unique moments as well as lived resources and empowering experiences in their circumstances and context.

Excerpts from a set of family consultations with one member in a state of great distress illustrate how mindfulness can work in generative dialogic therapy with a family.

14.2.1 *Luiz Is Contemplating Suicide*

A student in the Graduate Program in Generative Perspective and Professional Practice,² senior psychiatrist and family therapist Rosângela Russo, MD, brought this therapy situation to the class to explore generative dialogues in a difficult case.

This example presents the *case of a young man diagnosed with depression*. It demonstrates the use of a generative process in a family psychiatric consultation

¹Several authors have included generative dialogues in their different contexts of research and professional practices. As an example we include some of them (Crescini 2015; Fried Schnitman 2000, 2008, 2009, 2010a, b, 2011a, b, 2017; Fried Schnitman and Rodríguez-Mena García 2012; Higuera-Pedraza et al. 2020; Morales and others 2015; Ospina-Alvarado 2015; Sánchez-Jiménez 2019; Santiago-Estrada 2017).

²Degree program offered by Fundación Interfas in collaboration with The Taos Institute and CINDE-Universidad de Manizales.

and, more specifically, the importance of the professional's attention and full presence with open mind and wise discernment. In the dialogue between the participants, we will see emerging moments that enable the creative construction and recovery of resources to begin and develop transformative processes in therapy.

We will see how the dialogue contributes to the construction of different generative moments by building a tie between participants and a space of interpersonal and reciprocal recognition and trust as they begin to create resources and possibilities; by building a purpose jointly, a project for shared work, and a platform implemented for the sake of transformation; and by questioning the dominant story, the story constructed prior to the consultation, to then build novel generative versions. We will also observe how the therapist's own registers expand in dialogue with herself and with the clients and the later transformations that come with increased awareness.

Dialogues that foster reflexive learning enable both professionals and clients to recognize the novel and to take away emerging resources. They become equipped to detect possibilities that heighten the ability to discern and develop new knowledges and to explore and innovate. They are able to take a look at themselves, at their relationships and circumstances, from a richer and wiser perspective.

First session: A knot of problems

Luiz (19 years old) comes with his mother to a psychiatric service for a consultation. The consultation recounted here is a second opinion; the family brings along a letter from another professional with a diagnosis of depression and a recommendation that L be admitted to a local psychiatric hospital. The family is not sure how to proceed. L, they report, has lost all interest in his life: he has dropped out of his first year at university and returned to the city where his family lives. He then enrolled in a short course in order to later apply to another university, but he was absent a lot and generally unenthusiastic. He describes himself as apathetic; he feels as if something had broken inside of him. He says he is frustrated by the university and life in general. He doesn't say much. [*He does not express hopes or wishes.*]

The mother voices her concern about the changes in L. She remembers that he was happier before going away to study, when he had goals. Now, 1 year later, he has dropped out and doesn't seem to care about anything. She says she wants to help him, but she doesn't know how.

The therapist explores with L if there are moments when he can experience, see, or understand his situation differently or contemplate other, perhaps only fleeting, possibilities.

L shakes his head.

Crying, the mother says she doesn't know what to do. (L looks sad and uncomfortable when his mother cries.) It upsets her terribly to see her son like this. She insists that he go out, that he attends class, but he just wants to stay shut up in his room. She says, "We are looking for a medication that might improve the situation." [*T notices the relationship between L and M, how L's current state upsets M, and how, upset by her crying, L pushes her away.*]

The therapist's reflections: The dialogue between the mother and son is very poor, and I feel powerless. I have the sense it would be very hard in the current situation to offer help other than a conventional psychiatric solution (medication or hospitalization). I had that feeling for the first two sessions. After the first session, I thought it would be possible to do out-patient follow-up. [*Though she establishes a psychiatric professional tie to evaluate a course of action as the family requested, her observations and reflections exceed that register; they encompass the persons, relationships, problems, and the search for possibilities. She engages in the dialogue that takes shape between the persons while also dialoguing with herself. She is aware of the process and reflects compassionately and "without divisions." Throughout the interviews, she positions herself with mindful awareness and wise discernment.*]

Second session: Walking in circles

L has made no significant progress. His pain does not abate, and his loss of interest and perspective persists.

T's reflections: I have the sense during this session that I am walking in circles – the complaints and the conversation repeat themselves. The questions that I ask L go unanswered; M cries over her son's situation again. I feel as deeply powerless as I did at the first session. I feel we are stuck. I register my feelings, and I share them at the end of the session inviting further exploration of the situation. [*T decides to search for a possibility.*]

T: I'm not sure these encounters are helping you. Who else could come along to help us? [*T is an active and respectful participant. She includes the family and invites them to explore possibilities.*]

L: (quick to respond) My brother is home for vacation, and he'd like to come. [L is responsive for the first time. He opens up a possibility and paves the way for the construction of a tie with T. Generative moment.]

M: They get along well. [*Her response is in keeping with L and T's.*]

Third session: Listening to other voice and expanding possibilities

L, M, and P, the older brother, are at the session. Both the mother and the older brother are clearly upset when they speak of the troubles L is facing and how isolated and taciturn he is.

Unlike M and L, P is very talkative. He talks about his experience at the university where he too had a lot of trouble at the beginning. Crying, he says he loves L very much. L doesn't participate in the conversation much, responding to questions with only a gesture. [*A tie is built between T and the family that includes concern, affection, and love for L. The tie between L and T is strengthened.*]

P: I am on vacation and I wanted to come here. I am really worried about L. He seems to be pushing me away, and we are not doing the things we like to do together – that makes me very sad.

T: What things do you like to do together?

P: Not much these days. I haven't been home for a while, and I think L really missed me. Usually when I come home for vacation, we talk a lot, but not this time. I really miss our conversations.

T looks at L.

L: I also miss talking to P. [*L responds to T and P.*]

T: What would you talk about?

L: ...We would laugh a lot... But nothing's funny anymore... [*They recognize and restore their bond and include the therapist. They also register the loss and change.*]

T: (to P) How do you think you might be able to help L? [*T is including P, inviting him to construct possibilities.*]

P: I think I went through what he is going through now during my first year at university. I also wanted to give up on everything. L chose to study what I am studying. He had a lot of expectations when he arrived at the university, and now he is frustrated. I got over that, and I think L will too. [*P opens up possibilities and expresses faith in L.*]

P talks a little about his own life: how close the family has always been, his parents' divorce, and how much importance his family has always placed on his studies. L doesn't say anything, but he is listening carefully. At a certain point, P gets very emotional, expressing his love for L and how important his family is to him. L, M, and T are all touched by what P has said. L follows the conversation, indicating with facial gestures and expressions his agreement and engagement. [*They share a perspective of the family, their shared bond, values, and meanings.*]

T's reflections: I can see how close they are, how much they love each other. My tie to them also grows stronger when I am touched by their emotions. [*Mutual trust between the family and T grows. She participates reflexively and compassionately in a session with a family concerned because one of its members is having serious troubles.*] Though in the first two sessions the mother was very emotional, crying out in desperation, rage, powerlessness, Pablo's emotion incites another reaction in L. P speaks of his own troubles; he talks about the family and his love for L. When P speaks of his problems at the university, it opens up new perspectives for L.

Fourth session

L asks to come into the office by himself.

L: (looking at T) I've thought a lot about it, and I've decided to kill myself. If I get hospitalized, I'll do it in the hospital. I was relieved when I got the diagnosis of depression because it gave a name for all the pain I was feeling. But my perspective has not changed, and I think I've been feeling worse since I began taking the medication. (He falls silent, his eyes dim.) I want to kill myself. I am making my family suffer, and I don't want to see them suffer because of me. [*He expresses his pain and concern over the pain he is causing his family and the common mistaken belief that suicide will relieve his family's suffering and protect them.*]

T: How are you planning to do it? [*T is responsive and keeps the dialogue going, protecting the bond of trust and relationship in a very critical situation, thus enabling respectful exploration.*]

L: I'll hang myself. (Responsive)

T's reflections: I think we are at a critical juncture – while L is telling me he has made a decision about the suicide, he opens a dialogue with me (after all, he could have killed himself without telling me about it, but he didn't). [*T's full attention and presence. Wise discernment. T discerns between two distinct though simultaneous registers; she registers subtle differences and emerging moments.*]

I feel inundated by countless dialogues and reflections, different paths of inquiry, many of them contradictory and very different in terms of values. [*T dialogues with herself, recalling multiple dialogues in different contexts and moments. She is fully present and aware in her wise discernment, dialoguing with herself, her training and professional experiences. Thanks to her increased awareness toward wise participation, she is able to sustain a conversation geared to expanding resources to consider possibilities.*]

I connect to the option that conventional psychiatry has to offer, namely, to deal with the suicide threat: L is sick and he must be protected from himself. As a psychiatrist, I must follow the protocol because of the risk. I should increase his medication, ask his mother to come into the interview, and arrange hospitalization to protect him. My experience tells me that medication will not help and hospitalization at such a young age could well turn him into a chronic patient. I ask myself how to leave aside the expert knowledge and its immediate protocol. How much uncertainty will that imply?

Other options come to me: expand the register and contemplate ways to keep the dialogue that L started with me alive, explore possibilities that are not yet present. How to build a future perspective for someone who wants to die? I have to get a better understanding of what is going on with L. Can I consider his circumstances and pain without my perspective being colored solely by his diagnosis of depression? [*These inner dialogues involve her experiences with L, L's pain, and his trust in T; T's experience and responsibility as a professional; her education and background with its different traditions; her own values, which are starkly different; her commitment and compassion; and the risks and possibilities that each approach presents.*]

While all these options flood my mind, I remember a dialogue with another patient: a mother I had seen a few months earlier who had shared the desperation she experienced when she opened a door in her house and found her son had hung himself. She said that life had lost all meaning for her. Her question – the question she asked herself and me – was how her son, who in his suicide note said he loved her so much, was capable of doing something like this to her. She felt her own life had ended with his. She might live for a thousand years, but the image of her dead son would haunt her forever. The voice of that patient resonated powerfully in my mind. [*T remembers the voices from another dialogue and looks to them to inspire*

and guide her exploration. That memory helps her to transform the dialogue with L and to create new possibilities: a generativity that did not exist before.]

T: Who do you think will find your body? [*She invites L to discern.*]

L: (disconcerted by the question) It doesn't matter.

T: It doesn't matter to whom? [*She invites further discernment and exploration.*]

L: To me, because I'll be dead.

T: (not letting the conversation digress) But you're not dead yet. [*Further invitation to discern.*]

L: My mother. [*Responsive and mindful, he begins to expand his register.*]

T: Mmm... So, you must not love her very much... [*Returning in her mind but not mentioning the expressions of pain and questions of that earlier mother who lost her son, T brings in her voice as an active participant.*]

L: (indignant) How can you say that? I love my mother. She is the most important person in my life. [*Responsive. Generative moment. L looks to his bonds, his relationships, and his place as a son in the family.*]

T: I tell him about the conversation I had with the mother who lost her son the same way he plans to kill himself. I give that mother a voice. I speak of the intense pain that the act caused and the questions that she asked herself and me about her son's love for her.

L: (reflexive) She will suffer a lot. [*Generative moment. With increased awareness and mindfulness, he discerns the suffering that he will cause M, his own feelings, and the consequences and implications of his acts. His register expands, and his emerging knowledges undermine the paradoxical notion that his suicide would protect his family. He restores his relationships and becomes aware of his interbeing.*]

T: And how does that make you feel? [*She invites him to further discern, reflect, and generate new knowledges about himself and M that might help him to formulate other possibilities.*]

L: I wouldn't like to be the person to cause her that pain. [*L recognizes himself in a love-based relationship, a relationship of care and protection of himself and M. The importance of family ties as generative node is articulated with another node in which he has a transformed vision of himself. He takes relational responsibility for M and for himself.*]

T: You have probably made her feel a lot of things other than pain. [*T invites L to discern and distinguish more resources in himself in relation to M and to recognize other care spaces.*]

L: She really loves it when I play the guitar... [*L positions himself in a generative place.*]

T's reflections: Starting at that moment, we were able to build a platform for generative work that would then lead the process toward new paths, paths viable for L and his family. He was able to connect to love and care which, in turn, paved the way for a wider vision of himself and his relationships. He moved toward new resources and possibilities, toward generativity.

After that conversation, the family built a set of agreements that would enable L to find resources if he once again felt like he wanted to die. In psychiatry, such agreements are often called “life contracts.” These are some of the items of the contract we put together:

1. L, M, and P agreed that L would ask for help when the pain got very intense rather than cut himself off from those around him.
2. We agreed that M would listen to L’s pain without starting to cry herself. L says that when he speaks of his pain, he always gets the feeling that hers is greater than his, and that is why he doesn’t seek her help.
3. We agreed that M would keep asking L to go out, to go to class, to play the guitar, etc., but that, if he didn’t want to, she would not attribute it to his depression. He was sometimes just not in the mood.
4. L agreed to seek help and not cut himself off when he had these thoughts.
5. L said he wanted to take guitar classes again (he had stopped when his parents split up).
6. M agreed to be careful about what she says and not blame herself when L is sad.
7. M agreed to pursue other interests, because when L moved out to go to university, she also got very sad.

Toward generativity

After that session, the process became more generative; more creative possibilities opened up in L’s life.

The sessions continue and L never again speaks of suicide. He passes the entrance exam and enrolls in a public university. He is pleased with this new choice. We slowly reduce the dosage of his medication.

In January 2020, L returned from vacation with his family with a smile on his face: he was feeling good. He is no longer taking any medication. He describes the problem he experienced as an existential crisis that is now over. He knows there might be others, but he feels better prepared to deal with them. He mentions that during the family trip, he and his brother talked a lot, and he realized that he too had faced some similar troubles at the university. Both of them are black, and they have to deal with racism and prejudices. This was the first time we spoke of his place in the world and what it means to be black. L becomes more and more generative; he opens doors to more creative facets of his life.

T’s later reflections

I identified the turning point in the process that opened up a future perspective for L. [*On the basis of generative – wise – discernment, she builds new knowledges and ties together dialogues from different moments (present, past, and future.)*] That generative moment was when I invited L to consider that, while he would no longer be around if he killed himself, he would still have a relational future responsibility for his actions’ impact on those around him (McNamee and Gergen 1998). (There are convergences here in McNamee’s work, Fried Schnitman’s generative dialogue, and committed Buddhism.) The supposed protection of his family that led him to

consider suicide took on another meaning. By recognizing his responsibility, even in a future of which he would not form part, L is able to leave behind his initial position. The belief that nothing else would matter when he was dead is replaced by a vision in which we are all relationally responsible for what happens in the life of others, even in our absence. That vision shows that our actions contribute to constructing the place of the other – and, if L were to kill himself, that would be a place of pain, guilt, desperation, and unhappiness for those he loves. L was able to affirm that he would not like to construct that place of suffering for his family; he was able to construct a different version of the relationships and new knowledges, to restore the ability to discern, reflect, and choose. In the terms of relational committed Buddhism, he encountered the potential consequences of his actions.

I know that it is common these days for patients to be admitted to psychiatric hospital. I believe that is partly because of the risks that certain situations hold for patients and psychiatrists. Before critical situations there is no single answer. What is required is meticulous discernment and care where the uniqueness of each situation must be taken into account. We psychiatrists are also implicated in difficult relational responsibilities where we must walk the fine line between risk and possibility (engaged and responsible mindfulness).

After seeing L, I thought about how and how much we inhabit time: the experiential time of dialogues, in both psychiatry and constructionism. At stake in the process is a weave of dialogues from different moments – time lived and time to be lived in the future – that speak of our life stories. For example, I think of the dialogue I had had with the mother who lost her son – and that instantly led me to formulate my question. And as soon as I did, new meanings were constructed in which past, present, and future were joined.

14.3 Generative Process as Dialogic Mindfulness in Action

We understand the practice of generative dialogue to be dialogic mindfulness: an attentive and responsive embodied process of relating that creates meanings and practices, resources and possibilities, in the exchanges between participants. Dialogues are joint actions of interdependent relational participation that trace a direction for transformation and create new forms of life while opening up a viable future.

Generative dialogue refers to the gradual creation of something new in human relationships through dialogue, reflexivity, and conversational learning. In a generative dialogue, persons in a relationship come to see, experience, describe, and position themselves in a new and more productive way in the face of problematic or challenging situations (Fried Schnitman and Schnitman 2000).

Generative moments can expand, transfer, or create transformative nuclei that, if developed, can grow into privileged contexts for interpretation and practice. Inquiries focus on how these moments are or can be discerned and generated. How does something new emerge, and how is it consolidated as a context for novel

practice or meaning? What types of dialogic and social coordination foster that growth? What contexts or conditions facilitate the emergence of new ways of being in relationships (Fried Schnitman, 2002a, b)?

This construction of futures is only possible through acting on and exploring current circumstances. The possibilities created in generative dialogues become virtual realities which, once created, can be actualized step by step, provided they are sustained by transformative processes. Such processes contribute to actions that lead to existential alternatives and new and diverse realities for clients.

The generative process is a unique process that leads to a forward-looking search for the resources and possibilities operative in each client's circumstances. In other words, a future is constructed as the generative process advances in a joint exploration of the resources and possibilities that come up in the dialogue between professionals and clients. As participants actively seize on innovative possibilities that emerge during dialogue, professionals get involved in the relational field and develop a practice grounded in dialogic creativity, awareness, generative research, reciprocal inclusion, and relational responsibility. At stake is a pragmatic viewpoint centered on the novel actions clients utilize and how the possibilities these actions hold enable them to transform lives and go beyond its challenges.

We will now examine how a generative dialogue allows participants – professionals and clients – to jointly create resources and new possibilities in the here and now through mindful interconnectedness in dialogue in the face of problems, conflicts, and challenges. We will see how these resources are combined with the client's possibilities in a renewal of the self, relationships, and a sustainable future.

14.4 Dialogue or the Crafting of Interbeing

From a generative perspective, dialogue is the means and the instrument for the construction of realizable futures.

It centers on what participants can construct, on how to create unprecedented possibilities, and on active exploration. Dialogue can turn problematic situations into emerging resources and fertile new territories. The generative perspective focuses, then, on dialogue's capability to build intersections, to forge a path through the emergent resources, the options that become available, and the problems that led to the consultation. Discernment, enactment, and the progressive implementation of new possibilities to build a viable future in a spirit of curiosity and investigation are all essential to a generative dialogue.

The creative potential of dialogue envisions a series of reciprocal actions and an exploration and creative and productive crafting of new ways of interbeing. Generative dialogue expands the process from a problem-centered approach to the creation of new possibilities, increasing the capacities and skills of participants and providing them with additional resources to discern and work with what is emerging. The first implication of this perspective is a focus on the future and transformation, on the discernment of possibilities that can be amplified – or the creation of

nonexistent possibilities – thus contributing to clients’ alternatives. The second implication is the emergence of new knowledges and dialogically expanded awareness and wisdom: professionals and clients are jointly involved in a generative process and work together to develop resources in the present while constructing a long-range vision for the future and enacting it as new ways of living. The clients learn to learn about themselves by clarifying, exploring, and reaching their emerging resources and possibilities through a process that leads to transformation and a viable future (Fried Schnitman 2008, 2015, 2016, 2020a, b).

14.5 Dialogue and Generativity/Creativity on a Nonlinear Horizon: Circular Networks of Interbeing

A *dialogue*, as we have established, is a co-constructive, interpersonal process involving diverse voices and resonances in which people jointly create meanings and practices. *Dialogical confluences* are transformative processes in dialogues that extend over time, allowing new ways of making sense and new understandings and perspectives as actions and ways of living emerge.

Dialogue and interbeing are expressions of relational interconnectedness.

Bakhtin postulates that when a dialogue occurs, a multi-vocal unit is configured involving multiple relationships. Each dialogue, he holds, is unique, singular, and meaning emerges from that uniqueness; a dialogue takes place in a specific context and time, and in this dialogue diverse voices and other dialogues coexist (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Morson and Emerson 1990). Generativity will discern whether those voices and dialogues are coherent or contradictory, and it will make use of that complexity.

A generative perspective is based on creativity in dialogue between people and their unique relationships. Responsiveness and attentiveness are essential features of being in dialogue: participants can express and acknowledge their participation not only through words but also through reciprocal indications of connection and inclusiveness. Everything in dialogue, not only words but embodied language, tone, intonation, and gestures, is formulated with engagement and addressivity to the other. At stake is active understanding on the part of the listener.

Bakhtin stresses the capacity of dialogue to create meaning. People address and respond actively to an *other*; they have a purpose (intention) in a context in which they also anticipate outcomes. Participants shape dialogues from the outset, and all parties to a dialogue are actively involved in the formulations. The *other* is not necessarily another person, but perhaps other aspects of oneself, another dialogue or other dialogues that may or may not be in progress, on a topic, a group, a relationship, a feeling, an experience, a production, a characteristic, nature.

Reciprocal recognition of the other or others in dialogue is at play in every act of expressing or understanding. A constitutive feature of an utterance is its addressivity. Expressing and understanding are embodied actions of relating.

Utterances are never repeated because they depend on the context, on the situation.

Every utterance is shaped by intention and responsive understanding. People actively address an “other,” for the sake of “active understanding” – a key to generative dialogue. The one who listens doesn’t simply decode an utterance but also captures multiple relationships; she relates the utterance to her own complex web of interests and suppositions, imagining how it responds to future utterances of possible interlocutors and what type of answers it invites. She evaluates the dialogue and senses how other parties might understand it.

The words are jointly constructed through the reciprocal responses to the utterances by participants in dialogue in an interindividual process, a process of active understanding where the listener’s response is anticipated by the speaker. The process of constructing an utterance shapes everything about that utterance; the listener forms the utterance as it is being articulated by the speaker. In other words, the utterance is shaped by reciprocal addressivity and responsive understanding in the interrelational dialogic space.

Speakers and listeners can be actual or virtual. Just as utterances are multisided and addressed to different interlocutors, words are shaped by past and future dialogues and populated in an internal dialogism, a relationality of the words chosen.

Dialogues, then, involve multiple dialogues, voices, and projects, with centripetal and centrifugal forces. Each dialogue is connected to a network of dialogues by context and time. Dialogue, in its full complexity, is connected with relationships over time – a set of links to past and future dialogues that both facilitates and limits the dialogue underway in the present. Some of those relationship links are distant, others closer. In either case, their intersections and resonances in the present create novel possibilities.

Participants in the dialogue always produce something new and unique in the specific moment and context; at the same time, there are renovated echoes of the past and newer future contributions to the present.

A current dialogue anticipates the future and establishes links with what has not yet been said but could be said in either a near or a distant future. Other links – between dialogues related to our multiplicity and becoming as well as the multiplicity of contexts and ecologies in which we live – are also feasible. A generative perspective actively explores and creates novel networks and links that enable dialogic creativity in the moment and generative confluences over time in order to foster transformative processes. Creativity and meanings, then, take shape in the crisscrossing of dialogues, between and across multiple dimensions of relating to create opportunities for *horizontal, transversal, and circular networks of interbeing*.

14.6 Emerging Generative Processes and Practices: Recreating Relationships and Interbeing

Dialogues and confluences in dialogue are formative and transformative processes of selves and social worlds. In these generative conversations, people are integrally involved in exchanges, interweaving ideas, thoughts, perspectives, and feelings. In and through dialogue, self and relationships can emerge or change.

When a professional meets a client, she enters into a dialogue as a participant aware of the specificity and uniqueness of the process, the problems, the sufferings, and the expectations and hopes the client brings to each session. She must be aware of and careful about not only the implications of her participation in the relationship and the responses she receives but also the clients' initiatives. She intervenes actively in the dialogue with full presence. Her participation must be aesthetic, in keeping with the idiosyncrasy of the client, and ethical in its response to their requests and needs. As she participates, the professional is fully present and focused on the process of relating. But the professional must also be aware of the multiple processes that ensue, of her relationship to herself, to the client, and to the process, in a fluid and creative context. Again, what is required is *mindful* presence.

Through this mindful presence, the professional is attentive, responsive, and aware of the client responsiveness in order to work toward constructing a creative and productive dialogic relationship. Discernment and creativity enable one another, and the generative perspective prioritizes recognition of the emerging opportunities and innovations unique to each process. If generative moments are discerned, the participants' new resources and possibilities can then be useful to develop alternatives and learnings. We call this an emerging generative process.

In this process, the professional and client explore together the situation they endeavor to transform. Unprecedented possibilities can be produced and investigated through dialogue, and participants in a generative process become more curious and proactive, utilizing their own inquiries and reflections to improve comprehension and action as they occur. In this sense, the participants become creative authors of each process, focusing on the specific activities that generate new possibilities as working platforms for transformations. This generative capacity of dialogue enables unanticipated possibilities, transforms potentialities into new existential realities, and gives the generative-practice experience some of the openness and open-endedness key to learning and creativity.

Generative moments and creativity go hand in hand with processes where full presence and attention enable a multiple and discriminating register conducive to innovation and to the development of possible futures. The reciprocal responsiveness of participants constructs a team-like relationship; participants collaborate as a community inserted in a social ecology. A sense of belonging and common identity is created – a “we” is formed.

14.7 Working Within the Generative Process: Expanding Being and Interbeing

When people explain what has led them to consult a professional, they often provide a one-dimensional and problematic version of themselves and their circumstances (problem node). The professional must be aware of this; in the consultation she meets the clients – being the client a person, a group, a community – at the interactive moment and takes their difficulties and sufferings into account as well as their expectations, hopes, and contexts. Though not always expressed verbally, all of these elements are present and implicit in the request for a consultation.

As the process advances, the professional pays attention to how the client can expand on this initial moment, further exploring other dimensions and contexts of the client's life, while either being attentive to emerging instances, alternative resources, and novel elements in the dialogue that are not part of the problematic situation or actively creating them in dialogues with the client. The question is how to make the client's other facets, feelings, and voices audible and available in the dialogue to contribute to creating new alternatives and resources, ones that may enrich possibilities and relationships. What emerges from the complexity of dialogue, the links between dialogues, and the diversity that characterizes humans is what guides these explorations and generative investigations. By welcoming this diversity and paying attention to resources that appear, participants can advance toward emerging possibilities, new ways of relating, and life alternatives.

A dialogic fabric is woven from the different novel resources and possibilities that emerge in the process. Those resources and possibilities are mindfully linked in the here and now of the process, increasing its productivity and creativity. Clients and professionals engage in a dialogue with confluences and convergences over time, building a novel intelligibility that contributes resources (i.e., meanings and innovative ways of understanding and acting in specific contexts).

Generative moments are small variations or minor events in a dialogue that, when discerned and recognized, can make way for the creation of new perspectives and possibilities. They may be introduced by the client or the professional or simply occur in the dialogue. Attentive to reciprocal responsiveness, the professional will bring these emerging moments into the dialogue. If the client is responsive and validates and expands on the emerging moment, it can turn into a generative moment confirmed and expanded further through supplementation and responsiveness in dialogue. The client might be the one to bring possibilities that the professional needs to recognize and respond to, expanding awareness to usher in generative moments. When this occurs, generative moments articulate new perspectives and actions in the dialogue but also in the client's life, enabling paths to transformations. Opportunities and learning are brought to fruition. A new self and relational forms of being and interbeing emerge along with alternative narratives.

When a generative cycle further generates novel productive meanings and life possibilities, it can grow into a generative matrix of meanings. A generative matrix brings together the emerging perspective and its meanings, values, narratives, and

novel actions to enable the transformations of people and their relationships both now and in the future. It promotes more productive, viable futures in relation to what motivated the client to seek a professional consultation.

When novelties appear in the dialogue through these emerging moments and events, the client can recover or expand on resources from their broader life contexts. Creative processes to build resources or open up possibilities can be initiated by either the client or the professional. The resources and possibilities that appear in the process are then woven more deeply into dialogue; alternative paths are forged, paths that are generative insofar as they open up new opportunities. Recognition of these transformations, and reflections on them, ushers in new cycles, narratives, and generative learning for all participants, including the professional, whose awareness and wisdom grow.

An alternative life design is created contextually, step by step, in the here and now through responsiveness in dialogic actions. In the specifics of each process, transformative and enabling devices are created, opening up a field of study of transformations in which we can discern open networks. What was a part becomes a whole that is gradually woven over time out of heterogeneous circumstances, interactions, or contingent results within the process itself. At stake is a joint, participative, and mindful process of crafting transformation of self, relationships, and designs for interbeing.

14.8 Creation of a Generative Process: A Working Platform

The therapist's first generative actions focus on initiating a mutually inclusive, trust-based relationship that establishes reciprocal responsiveness and creates a dialogue. When the professional and client recognize each other as participants in a dialogue, the process is underway; it is consolidated when they acknowledge their reciprocal relationship and develop an *accepted relational reference*. Through dialogues and confluences in dialogue, a sense of being an active participant in the process, of being part of an intentioned community, develops. As the generative moments and cycles described above take place, clients feel increasingly engaged in a relationship that provides them with a different perspective on themselves, their relationships, and their circumstances. No longer limited to problems or critical situations, their perspective is expanded to encompass resources, possibilities, self-trust, and incipient trust in the process. Opportunities to discern resources and expand awareness and alternatives arise.

In their confluences in dialogue, the professional and client jointly build a working platform that connects problems to resources and possibilities and gives meaning to the direction the process is taking: a purpose and a project emerge. The *working platform* refers to a "consensus" in dialogue, in coordinated actions, in understanding the evolving process at hand. In short, it is a process that connects problems, resources, and possibilities over time in the direction of a viable future

within the framework of a relationship in which participants recognize the other(s) as parties in dialogue. Developing the working platform is also generative.

As problems, resources, and possibilities are named and connected, the links between them provide a sense of direction and an understanding of how each event relates to the working platform, to shared meanings, and to events and contexts. These emerging possibilities and resources are transformational; they help the client advance toward a possible future and new way of living. Mutual agreement on the direction clients are headed is not the result of the professional applying a certain model or strategy. It is, rather, part of the process of being attentive to dialogue, to problems, but also to resources; it is a part of being compassionate as an expanded awareness ushers in new forms of living through reciprocal responsiveness and recognition in dialogue. The working platform provides a domain for the dialogue between participants, a project for what the generative process is going to be about, a direction and purpose in context, and a step-by-step guide in the here and now. This is a process that creates a relationship, a framework, a direction, a community, and a sense of relevance in the direction of transformations, even though that direction can be modified as the process moves forward.

In generative dialogue, reciprocal responsiveness configures virtual *dialogic agreements* (e.g., convergences and confluences). It is through the process that participants (professional and client in a relationship) create those agreements “consensus” and clarify each resource or possibility as it is being constructed. Throughout the process, transformations occur in clients’ perspectives on, among other things, how to enact those transformations; their way of living is gradually redesigned. This pragmatic dimension is an integral part of transformations in being and interbeing.

A generative process can be seen as a set of emerging dialogic knowledges that changes as the process advances. The process encourages both the emergence of these new knowledges and local possibilities and their joint exploration during the process itself; the direction of the change is built in the dialogue, and it guides the responses of the client as problems are linked to possibilities. Learning and new dialogic knowledges are brought into the process, expanding participants’ wisdom.

The generative model heeds the whole spectrum, each step of creative processes that occur in dialogue on the path to transformation.

We will provide two examples to illustrate mindful crafting of dialogue and interbeing, one in a community mediation and another in therapy. We will articulate the macro approach to generative process to a micro analysis of the crafting of relational dialogic transformation. We deem the two cases complementary.

14.9 Generative Professional-Client Relationship

It is important for the professional to be mindful of the opportunities to initiate or recognize generative moments and cycles; to be observant of the clients’ responses and the confluences and supplementation in dialogue; and finally to build novel working platforms that move from the deficit or problem toward an emerging

opportunity. By expanding on these opportunities, meaningful transformations can occur for clients. Similarly, the professional is attentive to sustaining the transformations once they are initiated, moving to consolidate the necessary tools and foster reflexivity and learning. The professional is also very attentive to the client's increased mindfulness, expanded awareness, and wisdom that emerge through the transformations and the new ways of living and relating (interbeing).

In the fragments of the cases presented below, the responsiveness, active engagement, and transformations of the clients are palpable in their comments and reflections over the course of the generative moments, cycles and processes as it is the emergent new ways of living (interbeing), their increased awareness and wisdom regarding their own life and their emerging knowledges.

14.9.1 Illustrating the Process: From Gender War to Cultural and Community Transformations in Being and Interbeing

This is an example of a process of generative community mediation around gender conflict in an indigenous community.

Reason for consultation: The mediator reports a *major conflict* between the men and women in an indigenous community. The conflict is the result of a request or need on the part of the women to redefine their participation in community spaces. The men believe that this request does not fit with the community's perspectives and values. In the words of the mediator, "They were on the brink of war."

Generative process: Mindful dialogue. The mediator works with two separate groups – men and women – according to the cultural tradition of this indigenous community. The example shows the steps of a generative process that develop in the meeting with the men group. The generative process starts with two *generative questions* about the *past and future from the perspective of the present conflict*. Both questions involve issues of interbeing. The first question invited them to visualize a future involving their daughters: "Imagining the future for your daughters, how would you like it to be?" [*the future in the present*]. The second question refers to a moment in recent history in which the members of the indigenous community were not recognized as citizens [*the past in the present*]. The consideration of both questions by the group of men yields *generative moments and cycles* in which they review and acknowledge the women's myriad resources and competencies in terms of running the household and explore all that they could contribute to the community if involved [*building a possibility*]. Negotiations between the men and women began anew.

Working platform: The generative process of transformation is initiated by the men responsiveness to the two generative questions about being and interbeing formulated by the mediator. Their recognition enabled a working platform geared

toward advancing new possibilities in the process toward transformation. In this process, the men gradually build new meaning matrices and social narratives that integrate gender relations, allowing them to recognize and accept the women's point of view. They design *community actions* that invite women to participate in running the community. The generative process includes the transformation of the people, relationships, and the community itself. This is achieved by building the present-day integration of the women along with a viable future that can be sustained in the long term.

The women progressively participate in running the community council and gradually becoming part of political life in their country. Transformations are sustained and expanded [*building a path and a possible, sustainable future*]. Transformed ways of interbeing emerge and consolidate.

Social ecologies (interbeing) involved: the indigenous community, the culture and its changes and interfaces, the diversity among social groups within the community and the openness to considering different historical moments (past-present-future), and the transformation of community relations with social groups outside the community guide us to complex ecological perspectives, crisscrossing, and interfaces within context and time.

14.9.2 Illustrating the Process in Therapy: From “Being Frozen” to Generativity

The following example illustrates a generative process in training and therapy. We can see the construction of dialogue, step by step, and the emergence of transformations of being and interbeing. The increased awareness and emerging knowledges, both in the therapist and the client, are also evident.

A student in the Graduate Degree Program on the Generative Perspective and Professional Practice, Diana Torres, MA in Family Therapy and Clinical Psychology, in searching for her own and her client resources, she presented this consultation to the group.

First session: “Being frozen”

Therapist: What brought you to therapy?

N: (looks down and then smiles shyly) I met this girl 2 years ago, and well, it's weird, because I only saw her once. I went out with some people from school and she came along. Afterwards, I walked her home and asked her for her number, and she gave it to me. But when I called to ask her out, she said she couldn't that day and told me she'd call me, but never did. Every day since, I think what would have happened if I had done something different. I know this sounds bad, like I'm sick or psycho. What woman would want to be with me if she knew about this? It's crazy but I can't stop it. I cry constantly, thinking, dreaming about her (sighing). I have to get her out of my head. [*Problem node and implicit hopes.*]

The therapist expands the dialogue into other aspects of N's life (school, work, family relations). N is not working right now. The youngest of three siblings, he quit school a semester before earning his degree in graphic design. He does not have many friends and spends most of his time in his room crying about everything he wants but hasn't achieved. During the session, he expressed his desire to change. [*Expectations.*]

N: Still at home at my age! I need a change. I need to work, make money, and get a girlfriend. I can't go on like this. (His eyes are brimming with tears. He cracks his knuckles.) [*Expectations.*]

In the therapist's conversation about this consultation with her colleagues, a generative dialogue which increased her discernment and awareness took place. She comments that the client seems stuck. She feels trapped because she wants to help him but doesn't know how at the pace he needs. The group asks whether N mentioned any resources, or if she could discern any. The therapist says N mentioned that he likes manga (Japanese comics), but she dismissed it because she could not see it as a resource (pre-judgment). The group wonder if possibilities can emerge by incorporating manga art in their conversation; if manga art could be a resource, she could invite N to use manga to draft a proposal for his future in search of openings. A focus on the present moment, and not on pre-knowledge or dominant stories, helps professionals to listen more deeply, to recognize uniqueness and felt experience, and to meet the others and their unique circumstances.

Second session: Changing. Establishing a relationship. The generative process begins with moments, cycles, and a working platform

T: Talk to me about your art. I want to learn more about manga. (Her tone is interested.) [*Exploring if art is a resource that might provide possibilities.*]

N: OK, well manga art (sitting up straighter in the chair) is sort of like comics. I love it and I know I'm good. I never quit doing manga. I've done a lot with it and I keep getting better.

T: How is it that your voice, posture, and, well, your whole attitude change when you talk about your art? [*The therapist notes the emotion, change in posture, positive tone, and N's continued dedication to his art over time as an emerging moment and expresses her recognition and interest.*]

N: Oh yeah? (blushing and smiling, looking pleased). I hadn't realized that. [*Generative moment.*] It's just something I really like, a place where things flow for me. [*He adds that he recognizes the differences in himself. This generative moment is expanded to newer moments and generative cycles, when he adds that with art, "things flow," new knowledge about himself and his art emerge.*]

T: You say that things flow for you through art and I can see that's true. In fact, I was thinking about how some famous actors say similar things. That's what it feels like with you, what do you think? [*She explores his art creatively, exploring new meanings to feelings. Personal and relational resources emerge beyond failure, loneliness, and isolation. She expands the generative cycles and begins building a working platform that links problems, resources, and possibilities.*]

N: (with enthusiasm) Totally. When I'm with people talking about my art, things flow better, and I can get to know people. [*Responsive, N begins an emerging, novel self-narration. The therapist advances on building the working platform further. They are developing a shared intelligibility through confluences in dialogue.*]

T: What would you say to making a manga that is about precisely how you would like your life to be? [*T proposes a timeline that extends beyond his current difficulties into the future.*]

He begins to draw with great care, making a self-portrait filled with light and expressing desires for his future. [*Several generative cycles emerge in the story and, later, in his everyday life.*]

Third session

T: How did manga become part of your life?

N: (smiling) Well, when I was seven, I saw my brother drawing manga, and I've been drawing ever since (his chest swells). [*He proudly responds to the proposal, validating and expanding on it. Manga art is an encompassing resource in his life.*]

This dialogue allowed the therapist to link past, present, and future, since manga art has always been part of his life and is something he plans to do in the future. It is a generative tool that elicits change in the moment and is also a resource for the future. These generative moments and cycles enrich and expand the working platform.

Later, N becomes proactive and productive, initiating an ongoing self-exploration. [*New generative cycles appear that expand the working platform and create possibilities, such as a job search, new art-related initiatives, new relationships, and an end to crying over times when he felt like a failure, including the incident with the girl two years earlier.*]

Fifth session: Revelation

T: (after almost an entire session in which N has not mentioned the girl) I have a question. What allowed you to go the whole session without mentioning the girl? And you know what I think? If I hadn't asked this question, you would not have.

N: (smiling proudly, his eyes shining) I didn't bring her into the session. Truth is, it didn't seem that important, since I'm working on trying to find a job and posting things on my YouTube channel (where he has a cartoon series). She comes to mind from time to time, but she's not as important anymore. [*Expanded awareness, explorations, and new knowledges about himself, his relationships, and his circumstances. A whole social ecology (interbeing) is emerging, transformed and/or recovered.*]

N talked about his art and about changes. He has been sending out his résumé, getting ready for a manga show, and promoting his art. He appears enthusiastic and in high spirits in regard to current and future possibilities, acknowledging them with

appreciation and pride. The active exploration and construction of becoming a participant in diverse communities, of a future with actual changes in his way of living, is visible, as are the emotional transformations associated with his new “realities.”

Seventh session: Generating awareness, new knowledge, and learning

T: Let’s talk about the fact that you couldn’t get this girl out of your head but in the last session, she didn’t come to your mind. If these were different sections or chapters in the book of your life, what title would you give them? [*This metaphor explores what emerged in therapy and has been consolidated as new ways of living.*]

N: The first chapter would be the moment when I came for the first session and I’d call it “Being frozen.” And I’d call the second chapter in my story “Changing” because that’s the way it feels; I don’t get depressed so much, I don’t cry, I’m making up for lost time and taking steps to make changes in my life, because I feel better but I want to achieve more. [*Novel resources and possibilities are included, increased awareness and reflexive learnings in the narrations; transformations are part of generatively pondering changes in his life.*]

Although the entire process incorporates a transformation at multiple levels of the self, the client’s relationships, resources, and ways of living, the enactment of novel possibilities radically changes the motive for seeking therapy, materializing new ways of life. His increased knowledges and wisdom further expand his resources and possibilities of being and interbeing.

Therapist’s reflections

Something different emerged within me and for my client in the second session, something I referred to as a “generative bridge and an outburst of resources.”

N came with his own problem node, and I had my own problem node with respect to the consultation. I was unable to see that N had resources or that my resources would help him. For me, the outburst of resources came when I had a dialogue with my colleagues and began relating to the client from the perspective of his resources, giving N the possibility to tell his story and live through a tool that allows things to “flow” for him, manga art (mindful and responsive). That is to say, both of us experienced an outburst of resources that triggered change. On the other hand, when the problem node connected to new possibilities and a potential future, a generative bridge emerged. N could return to past situations that used to be problematic or negative and connected to them from another place, in the context of a working platform and enabling nodes. This allowed him to be in touch with his past experiences while also connecting to a potential future (mindful and responsive to his past and future).

Follow-up: Strengthening generativity

The therapist reports that she had five additional sessions with N. Besides showing his artwork at two major manga exhibitions, N is building a name for himself in

that world and is much more confident of his capabilities. The issue of the girl he said he was obsessed with is no longer part of the panorama.

N has made a powerful transformation that can be seen in his posture, his expression, and his life narrative, which emphasizes possibilities. He has found creative solutions to his problems and also creatively sought out opportunities. He is earning money. [*A transformed and active life matrix of enacted resources and possibilities has changed his way of life.*]

One year after, he has a formal job at a design company and is working toward establishing an arte manga project.

N has acquired and expanded new knowledges about himself, his relationships, and the resources necessary to become a participant in productive and creative communities, new social ecologies and contexts for himself expanding his resources and possibilities toward learnings and new forms of living.

14.10 Dialogic Mindfulness: Walking in Dialogue

Dialogic mindfulness is an engaged form of relating both to others and to the multiplicity within us. It is an active and embodied process of paying attention to circumstances in order to make transformation possible. Dialogic mindfulness focuses on experiences that can create resources and possibilities. That enables the perspectives and practices clients bring to the consultation to be expanded and their awareness and new learnings about themselves and their social worlds increased. A significant transformation in ways of being with others occurs (interbeing).

New knowledges and incipient registers guide our participation toward the search for and discovery of resources and possibilities. Recognition of clients and professionals' emerging dialogic knowledges helps to increase their resources and to facilitate generative processes where problems, resources, and possibilities are linked. Reflection on those problems, resources, and possibilities, and discernment of the transformations in them, underscores how each process is singular and unique.

According to anthropological psychologist Rosa Suárez (personal communication, 2016), "walking the words" is an expression used in a number of Latin American indigenous communities, mainly by their shamans or healers. It is a spiritual term that refers to a process of accompaniment and to life's teaching-learning. Walking is a metaphor but also a concrete action insofar as a road is cleared and explored. As one walks down the path of life, one leaves a mark; life experiences are sown by the side of the path. The word's spiritual harvest is co-constructed in dialogue through a relationship, through listening and engaging the "other" in dialogue and joint social actions.

Walking in meditation means to walk *knowing* we are walking, to walk mindfully, to walk aware of what is going on. We recognize what we are doing in the present moment and maintain a dialogue with others and with ourselves that enables the transformation of life forms and reflexively produces learnings and knowledges. As the examples illustrate, clients and professionals have a sense of the steps they

are taking. If we walk through dialogue with that awareness, then every step will be grounding, every step will be nourishing.

The generative perspective proposes joint and participative, active, and creative production of dialogue and generative processes as resources for this walking dialogue. In the examples of generative dialogues and processes we have presented, the creation and recovery of resources and possibilities lead to transformations and to new knowledges and learnings. Emphasis on emerging processes, on finding and building novel possibilities and paths that lead to alternative viable futures, implies moving in dialogue from problems, conflicts, and challenges toward transformations and sustainable futures.

Responsibility and knowledge are intrinsic to connectedness. Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of mindfulness as an act of awakening. To be awake is to be aware of something, to be able to take in what is going on. If we are awake, we can recognize what we are doing in the present moment and say to ourselves, “I am taking a step.”

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues Rosângela Russo, Diana Torres, and Rosa Suárez³ for their contributions to this paper.

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