Exploring how to establish shared togetherness

Introduction

In Learning Unit 2, we addressed the questions: what is togetherness and how should we understand our experience of togetherness? In this learning unit, we explore how to establish shared togetherness. It is important to reflect on these questions because everything we know about ourselves and how we behave follows from how we answer these questions.

Consultation is about interactions between a consultant and a client. Interaction means that both the consultant and the client execute actions in the consultation. They learn from their actions by reflecting on and conceptualising the experiences that result from their actions. Learning occurs in between actions. It is important that learning occurs because without learning the consultation process cannot progress.

However, when we say that learning occurs in between actions we talk about the actions of the consultant or the actions of the client. In other words, we consider the actions of the consultant and the actions of the client separately. But consultation is about interaction. Interaction means there must be some relationship between the actions of the consultant and those of the client. Thus, we must think of their actions as reactions to each other's actions. This is not a novel idea. Togetherness means offering presentations to others and accepting the presentations offered by others. Remember, the action of accepting is a reaction to the other person's action of presenting.

When we say that learning occurs in the interaction between the consultant and the client, we mean that learning occurs between the consultant accepting the client's presentation and presenting their own presentation in return. Similarly, learning occurs between the client accepting the consultant's presentation and presenting a presentation of their own in return. In other words, learning

occurs when the consultant processes the client's presentation, and when the client processes the consultant's presentation. The learning that occurs in interaction is very important because it is not only about learning in togetherness. It is also about establishing a togetherness that is shared by the consultant and the client. It is about finding common ground and creating a shared understanding of themselves and their world, which is the goal of consultation.

Consultation is a process of establishing shared togetherness to find common ground. It is a complicated topic. Therefore, we need to approach it carefully and work through it step by step. There is a vast body of literature on psychological intervention, discussing many theories and many ways and methods of intervention. Some of these are discussed in a subsequent learning unit. Yet, in the end, all these theories and methods boil down to the point that psychological intervention is a way of being together. The purpose of this learning unit is to explore a theoretical perspective of how shared togetherness is established and how learning occurs between accepting somebody else's presentation and presenting a presentation of one's own.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this learning unit, you should be able to:

- describe how interaction leads to shared togetherness
- Assess how interactions relate to information processing.
- explain how information processing relates to cognitive processes
- Appraise how cognitive processes relate to correlating actions in consultations.

Key concepts

consultation, togetherness, shared togetherness, entangled interactions, interlinked actions, correlated actions, concept of information, dimensions of information, processing of information, perceiving of information, intuition in interaction, imagination in interaction, logic in interaction, problem-solving in interaction

Sharing togetherness to find common ground

Generically, consultation consists of interactions between a consultant and a client. The consultant and the client aim to establish shared togetherness and find common ground through their interactions. Although there are many

theories of consultation and numerous kinds of consultative interactions, all can be traced back to this generic formulation of consultation.

All interactions in consultation are about presenting and accepting information. The consultant and the client interlink and correlate their actions of presenting and accepting. They process information between accepting the other's presentation and presenting one of their own. They process information through intuition, imagination, logic and problem-solving, which means consultation is primarily about being intuitive, imaginative, logical, and focused on problem-solving.

The goal of consultation is to establish shared togetherness to find common ground, which means neither the consultant nor the client is intitled to enforce their view of togetherness upon the other and colonise the common ground they look for. It is important to insist on this goal to ensure that consultation is established and maintained as a decolonial practice.

Togetherness is a basic human condition

"You are born alone, and you die alone". These are ugly words, and a nasty warning. When somebody tells you that you are born alone and that you die alone, they are warning you not to rely too much on other people because in the final instance you are likely to be alone. But these words are not true. We are with our mother when we are born, and most of us are born into a family that cannot wait to welcome us. We do not know what happens when we die, but our narratives about dying are about being united with others, be that our ancestors, or angels, or a god, or being reincarnated back into this world. Therefore, even in birth and death we do not imagine ourselves alone.

We may be biological singletons but psychologically we cannot survive without others. We know, for example, that people develop mental and physical disorders when kept in solitary confinement, in a closed space with very little interpersonal contact. This practice is considered so severe that the United Nations banned solitary confinement that lasts for longer than two weeks, and many nations now have legal frameworks in place to govern solitary confinement in their institutions.

The point is that togetherness is a basic human condition. Our wellness depends on the quality of the togetherness we

share with others. We become unhappy and anxious when the togetherness we share is riddled with conflict. We become lonely and isolated when we cannot find common ground with others.

We use high-level cognitive functions to establish togetherness

Togetherness is not a passive process. We actively create togetherness with others by presenting ourselves to them and accepting what they present of themselves. We present ourselves through our behaviour and we accept what others present of themselves by observing their behaviour. Sometimes we behave intuitively, but there are also times when we think carefully about our behaviour. We need to observe and interpret the behaviour presented by others, and we need to plan and execute our own behaviour following appropriate social rules. This means that establishing togetherness requires high-level brain functions, such as perception, recognition, thinking and planning. These are called cognitive functions. Cognition is our ability to execute high-level brain functions. There are four cognitive functions are fundamental to the ways in which we establish and maintain togetherness. These are intuition, imagination, logic and problem-solving. We use these functions in our everyday interactions with other people. We also use them when we consult with others.

Self-assessment activity

At the end of this learning unit is a list of articles/resources on togetherness. Read the article by Van Oers and Hännikäinen entitled: *Some thoughts about togetherness*. It can be accessed at the link provided in the reference. After reading the article, critically reflect on the importance of fostering an orientation of togetherness as early as possible. If togetherness is a basic human condition, why do we not always find it appealing? Share your views on the discussion forum.

Consultation is a form of being together

The process of consultation is just one of many ways in which we can be together with others. We often think of consultation as a special process in which a consultant helps a client to resolve an issue. It is true that consultation processes can be involved and complicated, especially when it involves interventions, but when we think about consultation in this way, we miss a very important point. We forget that fundamentally consultation is a way of being together. We miss the point that togetherness is a necessary condition for consultation and that we cannot have consultation without togetherness. Establishing and maintaining togetherness is a universal process that is generic to all our interactions, regardless of whether these

are everyday interactions with others or formal interactions such as the ones that occur in consultation.

Establishing and maintaining togetherness is a universal process that is generic to all our interactions. We use generic notation to describe what the cognitive processes of our togetherness look like fundamentally. Generic notation simply means that we enclose fundamental terms in square brackets. Fundamental terms are general. They can be replaced by specific terms in specific contexts. For example, when we state that [I] interact with [You] we use a generic description to indicate that this statement is fundamental and therefore generally and universally true. We can use this statement in a particular context, for example, the context of consultation, by replacing the generic terms [I] and [You] with terms that are appropriate in the context of consultation, such as 'Consultant' and 'Client'. Then the statement would be: The consultant interacts with the client.

From interacting to sharing togetherness

We live in a world that we think is real and objective. We think it is real because it is a reality that we cannot change, and we think it is objective because this reality is the same for everybody. However, strange as this may sound, there is no way to prove that the world is real and objective. We only have our individual perspectives of this world, and these perspectives are subjective. This is a problem because how can we communicate with each other, how can we be together, if we cannot be sure that the world in which we exist is real and objective?

We establish togetherness through interacting with others. We do this by presenting information and accepting information presented by others. But this interaction is personal because the actions of presenting and accepting are done by the same person. This means our perspectives of togetherness are personal and subjective.

In consultation, we need to bring the personal and subjective perceptions of the consultant and the client together to establish shared togetherness. They need shared togetherness to find common ground between them. Finding common ground in shared togetherness is a necessary condition for consultation. We need to consider this process carefully.

We use generic notation to describe togetherness as a universal human condition

Togetherness begins with interactions

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My interaction	We establish togetherness through interaction. I must interact with others to establish togetherness with them. I do this by presenting myself and accepting what they present of themself. In generic terms, this means [I] establish togetherness with [You] when [I] present myself and accept a presentation from [You].

Note that our presentations are evidence of our behaviour. We provide evidence of our behaviour by presenting ourselves in person physically or virtually. This means our behaviour is observable. However, the direct observation of behaviour is not the only form of evidence of behaviour. We also find evidence of behaviour in verbal and written descriptions of behaviour. Furthermore, written documents, graphic illustrations and drawings provide evidence of our thoughts and ideas, in other words, evidence of our thinking behaviour.

Also note that accepting a presentation is about observing the presentation and taking it on board. This is not about agreeing or disagreeing with the presentation. It is only in reflecting on a presentation that one comes to agree or disagree with the presentation.

Your interaction	The generic description of establishing togetherness is also true for the other person, the person I interact with. From their perspective they may also say: [I] establish togetherness with [You] when [I] present myself and accept a presentation from [You].

Our interaction	Therefore, we have two interactions of establishing togetherness, and both are equally true. Both are interactions of establishing togetherness between us. In generic terms we can write this as: [We] establish togetherness with [Us] when [We] present ourselves and accept presentations from [Us].

However, the togetherness we establish is not the sum of the togetherness established by me and the togetherness established by you. It is the togetherness we share. It is the common ground created by our interactions of establishing togetherness. Establishing common ground in our togetherness is a necessary condition for consultation. In other words, we cannot engage in consultation if we do not establish shared togetherness.

There are two perspectives when we establish our

About shared togetherness

togetherness. [I] establish our togetherness from my perspective, and [You] establish our togetherness from your perspective. I cannot know our togetherness from your perspective, and you cannot know it from my perspective. This raises a question. If we cannot compare our perspectives to see what togetherness we share, how do we establish shared togetherness? How do we find common ground in our togetherness?

We create common ground in our togetherness through a process called entanglement. To entangle means to interlink and correlate. Thus, things are entangled when they are interlinked and correlated. In this case, what needs to be interlinked and correlated are my interactions of establishing togetherness and your interactions of establishing togetherness.

Shared togetherness comes from entangled interactions

We interlink our respective interactions of establishing togetherness by taking turns in a serial process through which we establish togetherness. In other words, generically speaking, we execute the following actions: [I] present => [You] accept my presentation => [You] present => [I] accept your presentation => [I] present => [You] accept my presentation => [You] present, and so forth. Note that this description uses the generic terms, [I] and [You] to indicate that this process is the generic process of establishing togetherness. The generic terms can be replaced by specific terms, such as I and you, or 'the consultant' and 'the client' when we describe specific instances of establishing shared togetherness.

In this series of actions, your actions of accepting my presentation and offering a presentation of your own are linked in between my action of presenting and my action of accepting your presentation. Similarly, my actions of accepting your presentation and offering a presentation of my own are linked in between your action of presenting and your action of accepting my presentation. In other words, our interactions are interlinked.

However, apart from interlinking our interactions, we also need to ensure that our actions are correlated. In other words, we must make sure that each action in the series of actions correlates to the preceding action. Thus, your acceptance of my presentation must correlate to the presentation that I offered, and the presentation that you offer in response to your acceptance of my presentation must correlate to your acceptance of the presentation I

offered. Similarly, my acceptance of your presentation must correlate to your presentation, and the presentation I offer in response must correlate to my acceptance of your presentation.

My perspective of our togetherness and your perspective of our togetherness get entangled when we establish a chain of correlated actions, taking turns in a serial process of establishing togetherness. This is the basic process of consultation. Sharing togetherness and finding common ground in our togetherness is the condition for and the primary goal of any consultation.

Shared togetherness and consultation

Establishing common ground in our togetherness is a necessary condition for consultation. In other words, we cannot have consultation if we do not share togetherness. But this raises a question, namely that of precisely how shared togetherness links to consultation.

Consultation begins with establishing shared togetherness. Shared togetherness is a matter of entangled interactions. Interactions are entangled when they are interlinked and correlated. Therefore, consultation begins by interlinking and correlating the actions that the interactions consist of. These actions are consultation actions. There are different kinds of consultation actions, such as talking about something, demonstrating an idea, or performing behaviourally to express a state of mind.

The consultant and the client interlink their respective consultation actions by taking turns in a serial process of consultation. For example: The consultant presents => The client accepts the consultant's presentation => The client presents => The consultant accepts the client's presentation => The consultant presents => The client accepts the consultant's presentation => The client presents, and so forth.

The consultant and the client correlate their respective consultation actions by being congruent in the interaction. They are congruent when what they present correlates to what they accept. Thus, the consultant is congruent when their presentation correlates to their acceptance of the client's presentation. The client is congruent when their presentation correlates to their acceptance of the consultant's presentation.

It is not difficult to see how interactions of establishing togetherness are interlinked in a series of actions. However, correlating actions is a process that must be explored in more detail. Correlating what one presents to somebody with what one accepts from them involves information processing.

Therefore, we must explore how:
- interactions relate to information processing
- information processing relates to mental faculties (cognitive processes)
- iental faculties (cognitive processes) relate to correlating actions in consultation.

Self-assessment activity

In Learning Unit 4, you are introduced to a number of theoretical approaches to psychological intervention, one of which is family therapy. One approach to family therapy is known as Bowenian Family Therapy, named after its developer, Murray Bowen. Bowen's theory focuses on the balance of togetherness and individuality. While Bowen talks about this balance in terms of the relationship between various members of a family that presents for psychological intervention, think of this in terms of the relationship between the therapist and the client. Do you think there is a need to maintain this balance in the therapeutic relationship? Why/why not? Share your thoughts on the discussion forum.

Interactions relate to information processing

We introduce correlations between actions through processing information

I process information when I create my presentation. This means I export the information that I possess internally in the form of a presentation. In other words, I externalise internal information. When I accept a presentation, I import existing information and reflect on it internally. This means I process information by internalising information that exists externally. When the information that I internalise relates to the information that I externalise, I relate (correlate) my action of accepting information with my action of presenting information. I am congruent when there is a strong correlation between the information I accept and the information I present.

The process is similar for you, and we can conclude that you are congruent when there is a strong correlation between the information you accept and the information you present.

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We experience each other's congruence in our interactions when we accept and reflect on each other's presentations. The information that I accept relates to the information that you present. If I am congruent, the information that I present correlates to the information that I accept and therefore the information that I present relates to the information that you presented. You know that I am congruent when you accept my presentation and realise that it relates to what you presented earlier.

Because this process is similar for you, we can conclude that I know you are congruent when I accept your presentation and realise that it relates to my earlier presentation.

The concept of information

We process information when we produce or accept information. But what is information? It is a word we know quite well and use regularly, which is not surprising because we live in the information age. We understand what it means to have information about something, but when asked what information is, we struggle to produce an answer.

Information is a tricky concept. However, in the present discussion, we do not have to explore the intricacies of the concept of information. We can define information as the meaning contained in a differential. A differential is a difference between things. In other words, a differential is about difference and about things. For example, there is a difference between the colour red and the colour green. The is a colour difference. The difference becomes a differential when we add the things that the colour difference applies to, for example two apples. In other words, the difference is a colour difference, and the differential is a colour difference between two apples.

Information is the meaning contained in a differential. For example, the meaning contained in the differential of two apples of different colours may be that they are of different varieties, that they have different textures and that they taste differently.

The dimensions of information

When we consider information as the meaning contained in a differential, we must consider information in terms of both meaning and the differential that contains it.

A differential is a difference between two things. These

things can be concrete physical objects and events, or they may be abstract concepts and processes, which means information is obtained from either concrete or abstract situations. For example, a difference between two apples is concrete, whereas the difference between the concepts of love and hate is abstract.

Furthermore, things are already existing, or they are being differentiated. Existing things establish differences between them, thus creating information, whereas differentiating things means differences are used to distinguish things, thus relying on existing information. For example, two existing apples establish a difference of colour and produces information about variety, texture, and taste when one is red and the other green. However, one can also use the colour difference and existing information to differentiate one apple from the other and to select the one with the texture and taste we prefer.
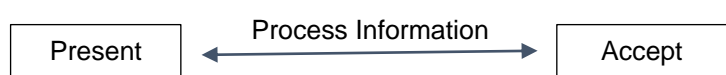
The definition that we adopted above means we must consider information in terms of two dimensions, one being how we perceive information and the other being how we process information. We perceive information as concrete or abstract, and we process information by producing information or by relying on existing information.

The American educational theorist David Kolb considered these dimensions as basic continuums in how we learn from our actions. In the present discussion we draw on Kolb's theoretical perspectives, but we repurpose his ideas to understand how we process and perceive information in our interactions.

The dimension of processing information

Our interactions are about interlinking and correlating actions of presenting information and actions of accepting information. We produce information when we present, and we reflect on information when we accept a presentation.

Presenting and accepting information are actions of information processing, but we cannot execute both at the same time. Because we cannot simultaneously present and accept information, we must consider them as separate processes on the dimension of information processing. This is illustrated in figure3.1. The dimension of information processing is one of the dimensions in terms of which we understand the concept of information.

The dimension of
perceiving information

The information we process in our actions of offering and accepting presentations is about concrete or abstract situations. We perceive this information as experiential or conceptual. Information is experiential if it is about things and events in the real world. It is conceptual if it is about ideas and processes given in our thoughts. In other words, information is experiential if it is given in our experience of the world, and it is conceptual if it is given in our thinking about the world. We cannot simultaneously experience and conceptualise, so we must think of experiencing and conceptualising as separate processes on the dimension of information perception (See figure 3.2). The dimension of perceiving information is one of the dimensions in terms of which we understand the concept of information.
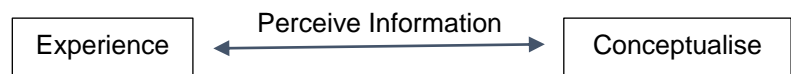
| Experience | ← Perceive Information → | Conceptualise |

Figure 3.2: The dimension of perceiving information

Information processing relates to mental faculties (cognitive processes)

We process information
through intuition,
imagination, logic, and
problem-solving

Humans have powerful mental abilities. We use experience to comprehend novel situations and manage new challenges. We recognise emotional content, and we grasp the values that motivate behaviour. We create literature and art. We discover new theories and change our perceptions of the world. These behaviours that we engage in naturally and sometimes seemingly effortlessly, involve mental abilities that exceed the capabilities of even our most advanced computers.

Our mental abilities result from our inherent perceptual and cognitive powers that are called mental faculties. Cultural and subject disciplinary contexts determine how mental faculties are named, defined, and understood, resulting in various, different perspectives. Here, we will limit our considerations of mental faculty to the two dimensions of information discussed above to identify and describe four

mental faculties, which we call intuition, imagination, logic and problem-solving. We need to join the two dimensions as shown in figure 3.3 to see how this comes about.
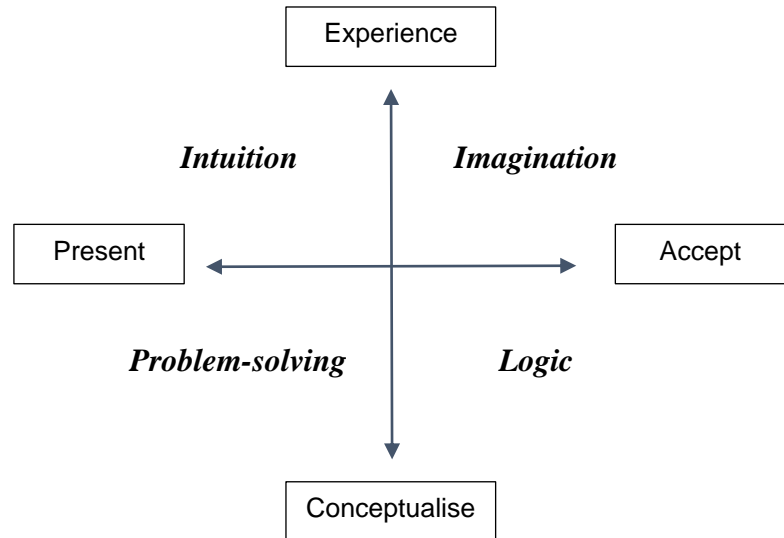
Figure 3.3: Four mental faculties in processing information (source and date)

The mental faculties or cognitive processes of intuition, imagination, logic and problem-solving are how we process information. We process information through acting or reflecting. Thus, we use intuition when we act on experiential information to present intuitive behaviour, and we use problem-solving when we act on conceptual information to present problem-solving behaviour. We use imagination when we accept and reflect on experiential information, and we use logic when we accept and reflect on conceptual information.

We process information through intuition

We experience a world that consists of concrete objects and events. This means we are aware of this world, and we have primary feelings about it. Our experiences contain information, and we process this information using intuition. When we act on this information our actions are intuitive. They come naturally without us having to think about them. In other words, we process experiential information through intuition to present intuitive behaviour. This behaviour can be in the form of physical actions, or verbal expressions or illustrations like drawings and diagrams.

Here is an example to demonstrate these ideas. Suppose somebody walking next to you trips over something. Without thinking you reach out to steady the person, preventing them from falling. In this case, the experiential information is your awareness of the person tripping. You intuitively fear that the person may fall and get hurt and you act intuitively by reaching out and steadying the person. You do not first think about the person falling and what you can do to help the person. Instead, you behave without hesitation, presenting behaviour that intuitively feels like the right thing to do.

We process information through problem-solving

We experience a world that consists of thoughts and ideas. These ideas are called concepts. The thought process we use to formulate concepts is called conceptualisation. Our concepts contain information. We process this information and act on our conceptual understandings to solve problems. In other words, we use our mental faculty of problem-solving when we act on conceptual information and present problem-solving behaviour.

Example

Let us consider an example to clarify this explanation. Suppose you see something you would like to buy, but you are not sure you should. Thinking about the situation, you know the problem is that you want the object, but that it costs a lot. You need to consider the value that the object has for you and the value indicated on its price tag. You consider several ideas about the usefulness of the object, and you also think about affordability. These are conceptual considerations. When you buy the object, you are acting on the information contained in your conceptual considerations, and you present problem-solving behaviour.

We process information through imagination

We experience a world that consists of concrete objects and events. This means we are aware of this world, and we have primary feelings about it. Our experiences contain information, and we reflect on this information to find meaning in our experiences. Reflecting on experiential information means we accept the awareness and feelings associated with the experience and speculate about what these could mean. We imagine possible meanings. In other words, we use our mental faculty of imagination when we reflect on experiential information.

Example

Suppose one of the plants in your garden died. Because you do not want this to happen again when you replace the plant with another, you consider possible reasons why the plant did not survive. It could be that the plant needed more sunlight, or that it did not get enough water, or that the soil did not contain the right nutrients, or that your troublesome neighbour poisoned it or cast a spell on you. In other words, you imagine possible reasons to make sense of the experiential information of the dead plant.

We process information through logic

We experience a world that consists of thoughts and ideas. These ideas are called concepts. The thought process we use to formulate concepts is called conceptualisation. Our concepts contain information, and we reflect on this information. Reflecting on our conceptualisations means we make logical inferences based on our conceptual understandings. In other words, we use our mental faculty of logic when we reflect on conceptualisations.

Example

Here is an example to clarify: Suppose we have the concept that rain comes from clouds and the concept that rain is water. Reflecting on this information, we could ask ourselves what clouds are. From the two concepts that rain comes from clouds and that rain is water, we could infer that the clouds contain water. This inference is logical.

Example

Sometimes an inference seems logical because it sounds plausible. However, plausible inferences are not necessarily logical. For example, suppose we continue our reflection on what clouds are by wondering how clouds contain and release the water. We may conceptualise clouds as spongelike and infer that they absorb water from the atmosphere and release water when they are squeezed by increased air pressure. However, the inference that clouds are spongelike does not follow logically from the concept that clouds contain water because there is no logical explanation of how the idea that 'clouds contain water' relates to the idea that 'clouds are spongelike'. This inference may seem plausible, but it is not logical because there is a break in the chain of concepts that sustain the logical though process.

Mental faculties relate to correlating actions in consultation

The possibilities of shared togetherness are virtually endless

Consultation requires shared togetherness. We establish shared togetherness through interlinking and correlating our actions of accepting and presenting information. However, this information is experiential and conceptual. Therefore, our actions of accepting and presenting are actions of accepting and presenting experiential information and actions of accepting and presenting conceptual information. Thus, there are various ways to establish togetherness. In fact, each interaction opens an increasing number of ways to establish togetherness.

To see how the number of potential interactions increases with each action, consider the generic process of interaction that we used before: [I] present => [You] accept my presentation => [You] present => [I] accept your presentation => [I] present => [You] accept my presentation => [You] present, and so forth.

When we express this generic description in terms of the cognitive processes that we employ to process information, we see that the first action becomes: [I] present [intuitive behaviour], or [I] present [problem-solving behaviour]. Similarly, the second action becomes: [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [imaginatively] or [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [logically]. When we link these actions, we get four potential interactions:

[I] present [intuitive behaviour]:
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [imaginatively]

[I] present [intuitive behaviour]:
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [logically]

[I] present [problem-solving behaviour]:
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [imaginatively]

[I] present [problem-solving behaviour]:
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [logically]

Next, consider the interaction cycle that starts and ends with [I] present. Quite a lot happens between my first and second acts of presentation. In fact, the cycle of my first to second act of presentation includes 32 potential interactions. At the second action we have 4 possibilities, at the third action there are 8 possibilities, 16 at the fourth, and 32 at the fifth action, which is my second act of

presentation.

In other words, next time you say something to somebody (your first act of presentation) and respond to their reaction (your second act of presentation), keep in mind that in these first moments of your interaction, the two of you already have 32 possible ways of establishing shared togetherness. The possible ways in which we establish togetherness grow exponentially with each interaction between you and me.

However, some of these ways of establishing togetherness are not rational and reasonable and therefore counterproductive in our attempts to establish shared togetherness. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there are countless rational and reasonable ways in which we could establish shared togetherness through our interactions, especially if we keep in mind that consultations consist of many more actions than the those illustrated above. The possibilities of shared togetherness are virtually endless.

There is a very important lesson to be learnt here. If there are endless ways in which we can be together, why do we insist on enforcing our ways of togetherness upon others?

Establishing shared togetherness in practice

So far, the discussion of the interactions of establishing shared togetherness was theoretical. Because the theory is complex, we need to consider practical implications to clarify the theoretical perspectives. Therefore, to clarify let's consider two examples. These examples show rational ways of establishing togetherness.

Example 1

Let's begin with a generic description of establishing shared togetherness.

[I] present [intuitive behaviour]:
=>[You] accept and reflect on my presentation [imaginatively]
=> [You] present [intuitive behaviour]
Or
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [logically]
=> [You] present [problem-solving behaviour].

Now, let's consider the generic description in terms of an example, in which [I] is replaced by 'Client', and [You] by 'Consultant'.

Consider the first interaction between the client and consultant.

Client: It is springtime. I feel happy.

Consultant: (1) So, you feel positive and like you have more energy?
(2) Yes, seasonal mood shifts occur, usually associated with changes in brain chemicals, such as serotonin.
(3) I think we will have a warm summer.

The client presents intuitive behaviour: The client experiences springtime and intuitively act on this experience with feelings of happiness, which they express verbally. In other words, the client presents intuitive behaviour in the form of a verbal statement.

The consultant accepts and reflects on the client's presentation, but we cannot see exactly how the consultant does this, because accepting and reflecting are internal processes. We must consider the behaviour that the consultant presents in response to the client's presentation and deduce from the consultant's presented behaviour what information they accepted and how they reflected on this information.

In (1) the consultant presents intuitive behaviour: The consultant's presentation is about the client feeling positive and more energetic. This is about the client's experience, or more precisely, it is what the consultant imagines the client experiences. Thus, the consultant accepts the client's intuitive behaviour, reflects on it imaginatively, and responds intuitively to the client's intuitive verbal statement. In this interaction the consultant and the client use intuition to establish their shared togetherness.

In (2) the consultant presents problem-solving behaviour: The consultant resolves why the client feels happy in springtime. The consultant accepts the client's intuitive verbal expression but reflects on it logically and applies conceptual information to resolve why the client feels happy in springtime. The consultant presents their problem-solving behaviour in the form of a verbal explanation. In this interaction, the consultant and the client use intuition and problem-solving to establish their shared togetherness.

In (3) the consultant presents unreasonable behaviour: The consultant presents a response that does not correlate to the client's presentation. The consultant presents intuitive behaviour in the form of a verbal statement about the

expected experience of a warm summer. The consultant does not accept and reflect on the client's statement about springtime and happiness and presents unreasonable intuitive behaviour in the form of an unreasonable verbal statement. An unreasonable presentation is one that is not based on good sense. This interaction does not encourage shared togetherness.

Example 2

Consider the following generic description of establishing shared togetherness.

[I] present [problem-solving behaviour]:
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [imaginatively]
=> [You] present [intuitive behaviour]
Or
=> [You] accept and reflect on my presentation [logically]
=> [You] present [problem-solving behaviour].

Now, consider the generic description in terms of an example, in which the generic [I] is replaced by 'Client', and the generic [You] by 'Consultant'.

Client: One should focus on improving one's memory when one learns new stuff rather than try to understand everything because in the end, everything one knows is stored in one's memory.

Consultant: (1) Are you saying that memorising instead of trying to understand things could save a lot of time when one learns new things?
(2) The problem with memorising is that memory is not about retrieving individual bits of information that have been stored in a specific place in the brain. It is about constructing information from traces that have been dispersed throughout various parts of the brain, which means one must understand what one learns.
(3) In the information age it is not necessary to learn anything new because one can use the internet to look up anything you want to know.

The client presents problem-solving behaviour: The client explains how one should tackle a new learning task. There are two ways to do this. One can either memorise the material or try to understand it. The client resolves the problem of which approach to follow by arguing that memorising is the better approach. The client applies their conceptual understanding that all knowledge is stored in

one's memory to resolve the problem.

In (1) the consultant presents intuitive behaviour: The question the consultant asks concerns experience. The consultant's question is about whether a particular learning approach could be experienced as saving time. This means the consultant accepts experiential aspects of the client's presentation and reflects on this information by imagining possible experiences. The experience imagined and presented intuitively by the consultant is the experience of saving time. In this interaction, the consultant and the client use intuition and problem-solving to establish their shared togetherness.

In (2) the consultant presents problem-solving behaviour: The consultant explains that memory is not simply a place where bits of information are stored, but that memory is also about constructing information from various parts of the brain. Therefore, the consultant resolves the issue of which approach to follow when learning new information by arguing that both memorising and understanding are required. The consultant applies their conceptual understanding of how memory works to resolve the problem. In this interaction, both the consultant and the client use problem-solving to establish their shared togetherness.

In (3) the consultant presents unreasonable behaviour: The consultant's presentation does not correlate with the client's presentation. The client's presentation is about learning as memorising and understanding, whereas the consultant's presentation is about the necessity to learn. The consultant accepts only a small part of the client's presentation, namely the concept of learning, and reflects on this information. Although the consultant's reflection is logical it is based on limited information. Therefore, it is not surprising that the consultant's presentation does not make sense considering the client's presentation. This interaction does not encourage shared togetherness.

Self-assessment activities

1. The issue of togetherness raises several important issues, particularly for you as student. In the first instance, you are a studying at a distance learning institution where psychical interaction with other students and lecturers is limited. In the second instance, all of us had to contend with various degrees of lock down and social distancing for more than two years. Given that togetherness is a basic human condition, how did this impact you? How do you

think this impacted those who required psychological intervention? Share your experiences and views on the discussion forum.

2. In the list of resources below is an article by Bakardjieva entitled: **Virtual togetherness: an everyday-life perspective**. It can be accessed at the link provided in the reference. Read the article and relate it to the issues above. Do you think virtual togetherness fully compensates for the lack of physical togetherness imposed on us during Covid, and you even more so as a student at a distance learning institution? Also, critically reflect on these issues within the context of psychological intervention and share your views on the discussion forum.

Summary

In this learning unit, we established that togetherness is a basic human condition and discussed the importance of high-level cognitive functions to establish togetherness. We explored how to establish shared togetherness in the context of psychological intervention, the importance of the interactions between the consultant/therapist and client in this pursuit, and the learning that emanates from these interactions. We've said that the learning that occurs in these interactions is very important because it is not only about learning in togetherness. It is also about establishing a togetherness that is shared by the consultant and the client. In psychological intervention, the interactions constitute the consultation process, which is a process of establishing shared togetherness to find common ground.

Disclaimer: The material in this unit was adapted from learning material developed by Prof Vasi van Deventer.

List of resources

1. Aji, T.S., Karim, A., Hori, M., Maryati, S. Nurkholis, Sudin, M., Jakaria, S., Irfan, A., & Nurjannah, W. (2020). The concept of togetherness and its implications for the unity of the society. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, 24*(08): 13800–13808. 10.37200/IJPR/V24I8/PR281364. The article focuses on an understanding of togetherness according to Islamic religious teachings and can be accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341914783_The_Concept_of_Togetherness_and_its_Implications_for_the_Unity_of_the_Society_Study_of_Elucidation_by_Quthb

2. Bakardjieva, B. (2003). Virtual togetherness: an everyday-life perspective. *Media, Culture & Society, 25*: 291–313. As the title suggests, the article explores how we can

enact togetherness virtually. It can be accessed at:
https://www.normfriesen.info/irm/Bakardjieva_Togetherness.pdf

3. Buber, M. (2000). *I and thou*. Translated by R.G. Smith. The book can be accessed at
    https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~akantor/readings/BuberMartin-i-and-thou.pdf. Buber
    presents a philosophy that describes how personal dialogue that is grounded in
    togetherness can define the nature of reality. Buber's major thesis is that human
    existence may be defined by the way in which we engage in dialogue with each other,
    with the world, and with God.

4. Mackay, L. (2012). Trauma and Bowen Family Systems Theory: Working with adults
    who were abused as children. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy,
    33*(3): 232–241. Doi: 10.1017/aft.2012.28. The article can also be accessed at
    https://www.thefsi.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Trauma-and-Bowen-Family-
    Systems-Theory_Working-with-Adults-Who-were-Abused-as-Children.pdf..

5. Van Oers, B. & Hännikäinen, M. (2001). Some thoughts about togetherness: An
    Introduction. *International Journal of Early Years Education 9*(2):101–108.
    DOI:10.1080/09669760120053466. This article looks at the importance of the social
    interactive dimension of learning. It can be accessed at:
    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248981196_Some_Thoughts_About_Togethe
    rness_an_introduction_Reflexions_sur_Togetherness_Algunos_Pensamientos_Sobre_e
    l_Sentimiento_de_Union

6. The following is a link to a Master's thesis by an architecture student and looks at
    experiences of social isolation and loneliness within student accommodation in New
    Zealand and explores how these challenges can be addressed through designing for
    well-being and atmosphere. It can be accessed at:
    https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/thesis/Togetherness/16531317