

More Quickening than Light: The Surprising Gift of Conversation

Linda Hall

Excerpt from chapter 4 in the book: *Psychophonetics Holistic Counseling & Psychotherapy: Stories & insights from practice*

Pictorial imagination is threatened with extinction in our times, as media creates and pours other peoples' processed and packaged images into our living rooms. Children are as likely to see the movie before they have read the book, and so even reading, which once left something to the imagination, is often now interpreted for us first by the filmmaker. While children are best nourished in their early years by their natural, dreamlike pictorial imagination, this ability is sorely threatened by the developing intellectuality of later childhood and then adult life. While the thinking faculties need to be awakened as we approach adulthood, premature awakening and imbalanced intellectuality can make disembodied "talk therapy" a closed circuit of supposition, analysis, theorizing and fantasy. The artistic and action therapies aim to break this closed circuit by appealing to the ability of humans to engage with their pictorial imagination and hold "conversations of the psyche" without dependence upon the words around which the intellect weaves its self-talk.

So, it has been with some surprise that I have found myself working to such an extent with verbal conversation with clients. It is only because I can see that their pictorial imagination is being awakened through the conversation that I am able to embrace it. It is this pictorial imagination that supports the "visualization" that is the essential guide for the action work aspect of Psychophonetics. Without the visualization, the client could become stuck on the circuit of theory, analysis and fantasy. The coming to a Common Picture between client and counsellor would be dry and lifeless. The name "Common Picture" suggests an experience that is more pictorial than mere "ideas."

Pictorial imagination has the potential to liberate the client and counselor from reducing the issue into a matter of assumed "cause and effect": I feel and behave like this because this event happened to me. Out of the pictures themes emerge. The client's story becomes a bridge for the soul, uniting the world of imagination to the world of thinking, potentially cooperative worlds increasingly divided by the abyss created by the over-intellectualization of our times. When this bridge is created by the story being told and received in a way that awakens pictorial

imagination, then "living thinking" can thrive: the kind of thinking that sees the world as more than the sum of its parts. Only when the world is viewed in such a way can true understanding occur.

Such imaginative thinking prepares the way for the blooming of intuitive perception. Mere sensory observation and intellectual perception lead us only into the debating room, where conflicting, concrete, so-called facts are hurled from side to side: a debate of theories, analyses, prejudices, fabricated laws and morals, stereotypes, opinions and idealisms. If we are overly habituated to discussion then we can hardly conceive of higher levels of conversation (Spock, 1983:9).

'Whence came you hither?' asked the golden king.

'Out of the clefts where gold dwells,' replied the serpent.

'What is more glorious than gold?'

'Light'

'What is more quickening than Light?'

'Conversation'

Goethe: *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*

This is the quandary of the client, whose own inner landscape is often the scene for such circular and repetitive debate. Out of this circuitous debate little awakened understanding or insight can come, but only quarrelling inner opinions or even despair. Sometimes I sense that clients come to counseling unconsciously or consciously looking for an adjudicator. How I manage not to become this adjudicator while facilitating a therapeutic conversation is largely an unfolding mystery to me still.

However, I offer these insights:

- Knowing that the Conversational Phase is a veil over insights that lie deeper than words and are accessible only through an intuitive act requires a different approach. I listen differently, probe differently and challenge differently.
- A quality of silence is allowed to develop throughout the client's "storytelling" and ensuring conversation, so that "words for words" sake don't become disturbers of the peace, destroying our sense of inner quiet and the development of our intuitive capacities (Spock, 1983:6).
- Suspend inner chatter as the clients offer their stories, and while listening, allow only pictures to come intuitively. Many clients have told me that Mind Mapping has facilitated their storytelling greatly, as it is an outward sign

of inner attention, uninterrupted attention they often have never experienced before. Some have said that by my scribing their story it assures them that I am not sitting there thinking opinions and theorizing about them, but that I am focused only upon their picture of their story. It affirms for them very literally that I am doing client-focused counseling. They sense that my "picture," offered only after their story is fully spent, must be deeply informed by their picture, since it is clearly where I have been devoting all of my attention.

- Intentionally "sacrifice" thinking, sensing, and picturing to the pictures "painted" with the clients' words, their natural bodily gestures made as they speak, their breathing and with the sounds that accompany their words. This can be a happy sacrifice and is also a blessing, as it is the best way I have found to digest the suffering expressed in these stories. Only by being fully with the client do I maintain my immunity to being overwhelmed by the suffering within it, or by my own reactions to it, and to any potential burden I could be tempted to take on as a facilitator.

I have had the privilege of working with clients who have come with a long-term intention: to use the counseling sessions as a way to practice self-reflection and spiritual development, not only to address chronic or critical issues of concern. These clients have often voluntarily reported that the conversations we have shared over time have trained them to deepen their ability to think in pictures themselves in their everyday lives.

For example, one client reports that she is increasingly able to picture inwardly, both backward to a moment when a feeling was bypassed and a reaction took over, and forward to potential reactions she can sense arising in the future as a result of feelings to which she is currently slow to awaken. As a result of this deepening sensing and visualizing/picturing she is finding that her relationship to both past and future is more and more available to her response ability. The once overwhelming effect of fears, self-doubts and self-hatred is giving way to her growing "immunity"...

My experience of the conversational phase of counseling has confirmed that to achieve true conversations one must, in short, build with the material of intuition, and to reach this height everything of a personal, sentient nature must be sacrificed and only then can a conversation find its way to necessity and become a conversation with the spiritual world as well as with our fellow human beings. We need to remain awake to the importance and healing

power of an in-depth conversation in itself as well as its importance when continuing into an action phase.

Linda Hall: Master of Psychology (Artistic Couns); Adv.Dip. Holistic Couns; Dip.Philophonetics-Couns; BA; DipEd.



After being in Singapore for five years, Linda is now based in Adelaide, South Australia. She is the director and trainer for Artbeat Education, a Singaporean initiative for adult training & therapeutic playgroups for children. Linda has more than 30 years of experience working as an educator, healing arts practitioner, psychotherapist/counsellor & consultant.

For 25years, Linda worked as a volunteer with recovering addicts and for nearly 20 years has been involved in research, with a team in South Australia, examining the impact of nutritional factors in illness and health.

Linda has taught counselling and artistic therapies at a number of institutions in Australia and in Asia: some of these include the Brahm Education Centre and Sophia Course Works in Singapore, the Global Village Association in Macau, and the Metta Welfare Centre in Sri Lanka.

Dedicated to non-intrusive and holistic methods in therapy and education, Linda was featured in a 2007 Singapore Mediacorp Channel 8 documentary: "No such thing as a bad kid."

Linda has a private counselling practice, conducts professional and personal development courses and workshops, as well as therapeutic classes in play and artistic activity for adults, adolescents and children. She also trains parents in creative discipline. Recently, Linda has set up a separate home in Adelaide for people in transition and who need some support in their life.

Email: linda.artbeat@gmail.com

Website: www.artbeateducation.com.au



***When the heart weeps for what it has lost,
the soul rejoices for what it has found.***

(a Sufi saying)