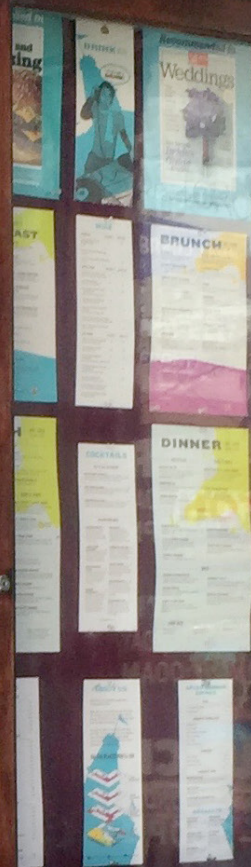


# Value Healing

## MISSION STATEMENT

We acknowledge people's pain, hurt, and suffering and enable people to find some meaning, a sense of wholeness, and re-connection to themselves and the world around them.

NO  
SMOKING  
within  
30 feet of  
entrance





***“I have my  
culture to fall  
back on” and  
“Everyone  
needs a sense of  
identity.”***

# The story

Over the winter, and now into spring, we've had weekly conversations with Olivia. Conversations where pain, trauma and disappointment play the characters and where abuse, drugs, alcohol and death fill many scenes. Talking to Olivia, you can see the knock on effects of her traumas and the thick skin of resilience she has built around herself. Occasionally you can see where the skin's cracks are, the weak spots where there has not been the opportunity for sense-making or healing.

For the past 11-months, Olivia has been trying to place less attention on her addictions and more attention on her other passions in life; she is a strong Indigenous singer and drummer. She finds solace in her culture and often tells us: "I have my culture to fall back on" and "Everyone needs a sense of identity." She tries to keep her hands active with furniture making, repeating the phrase "I need to keep busy" like a mantra.

And yet the addiction hangs on, resurfacing after an old court case is reopened; in moments of boredom; in social situations in which Olivia longs to be like everyone else. When Olivia uses, her future narrative fades. She doesn't want help. Moments of clarity do re-emerge, but unpredictably. After a good night's sleep Olivia decides she wants to talk to someone and maybe re-enter detox. But, making appointments in advance also doesn't work for her because she does not know what her days and weeks look like and how she will feel. She doesn't want to plan for healing, she just wants to engage with it.

So how can we bring healing more into Olivia's everyday life? How can we make it less a destination and more an ongoing process of renewal?

A drop-in centre with healing as the central value would be a place where people are encouraged to make sense of their experiences; reconnect with their bodies, minds, and spirits; and explore what balance looks and feels like, from multiple cultural lenses (e.g. Eastern, Western, Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, etc.)

Healing in this scenario would not just be about outsourcing to medical professionals, but about curating a range of healing moments with and for people. These would be moments that bring together the different parts of the human experience - the physical, the emotional, the intellectual, the social and the spiritual. So nutrition, exercise, meditation,



breathing, sleep, and stress-relief would take a prominent everyday place, drawing in the skills and knowhow of community members and practitioners in training.

Indeed, time spent at the drop-in would focus on promoting self-care. The environment would give people space for their emotions. Whilst drinking would not be allowed, for those wanting distraction or relief from incessant thoughts, there would be things to do on demand. Computers and Ipods would be available for check-out. They would be loaded with content of healing practices such as mindfulness, balance, laughter therapy, etc. Content would be tagged by emotion and thus could easily be matched to what people are needing in a moment. Regular everyday conversations would be turned into healing moments where staff and trained peers would guide members in reflecting and then reframing themselves and their view of themselves in new ways. These curious conversations would not be about rehashing the past, but about recognizing people's preferred actions, motivations, desires, and purposes.

That means a member who comes to this drop-in centre would not just be waiting for a bed or a therapy session to open up. They would also be immersed in an environment laden with symbols, stories, and language promoting the "re-interpretation" of life; this is what Dr. Bernie Siegel, a well known doctor, defines as healing; it's about evolving the stories we tell about ourselves in relationship to the people and places around us.

# Beliefs

## WE BELIEVE THAT...

### **Everyone can heal.**

Everyone - no matter their history or their fuck-ups - has the capacity to be whole amongst others.

### **People are not problems.**

People aren't the problem. The problem is the problem. We separate the challenges people face, from the people they are.

### **Self-actualization isn't a luxury.**

Yes, we all need food, sleep, and medical care. But, we also all need the opportunity to make meaning from experiences - particularly the painful ones. As Viktor Frankl says, "Suffering ceases to be suffering in some way at the moment it finds a meaning."

### **Relationships matter.**

Healing is an inherently relational process - it involves strengthening relationships with your mind, your body, your spirit, your culture, and your significant people.

# Outcomes

## WE'RE AFTER ...

### **Greater balance**

People report that their emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical health are in better balance. They are attending to all parts of themselves.

### **More resources**

People have more internal resources to draw on (more recognition of their own strengths, resiliencies, strategies) and more external resources to tap into.

### **Increased connectedness**

People have re-established or strengthened relationships with parts of their culture and people of significance in their life.

### **More engagement, less isolation**

People feel less 'estranged' from the world around them, less judged, more understood, and are increasing their use of community opportunities (e.g. libraries, museums, courses, talks, etc.)

### **Enhanced meaning**

People are revising their own narratives, and report deriving some meaning from their tough experiences of distress, pain, and suffering.

### **Improved mental health**

People report less symptoms of depression, and growing future orientation.

# Metrics

- % of members who can talk about a preferred development
- % of members who can share one of their internal strengths
- % of members actively engaging in taster sessions
- # of members maintaining new practices
- % of members accessing external resources

# Practices

## MICRO

### **Curious conversations (story editing)**

How do you encourage people to re-frame their personal story, and recognize their own internal resources? Enter the practice of curious conversations. A Reflector engages people in one-on-one conversations. Using question prompts and tools inspired by narrative therapy, they pull out a person's exceptions, small initiatives, or preferred developments. Doing so brings people's intents, values, purposes, and strategies to the surface. For example, when Olivia took part in a curious conversation, one thing she said was "I can't make appointments." It was pointed out that she had made an appointment for this very conversation. This made her pause and reflect on her capacities. Such conversations can renew motivation, agency, choice, and aspiration.



***Read more about this practice & how we have been doing it! Go to page 28***



### **Mary Poppins bag (taster experiences)**

How do you turn idleness and boredom into stimulation and learning? How do you respond to an emotion in that moment, and offer just-in-time resources? The Mary Poppins bag can help. A Reflector wears a bag loaded with novel content - excerpts of books, poems, articles, podcasts, videos, exercises tagged by topic and emotion. We know from psychological research that 'redirection' can be effective. That's where we help people express their emotion differently. When a Reflector hears a member express frustration, sadness, or boredom, they have a menu to offer. For example, when Joanne told the Reflector that she was hungover and was becoming anxious, the Reflector presented her with the menu. Joanne picked a mindfulness podcast to listen to. She reported that the exercises helped her relax and think more clearly. She said she would use this strategy again in the future - particularly to cut out the night time noise & frustration at the shelter.

***Read more about this practice & how we have been doing it! Go to page 36***



### =Spotlight practices

Practices that have been developed and practiced more than the others, follow the page numbers to see more.



#### **Pick 'n' mix (feedback)**

How do we support and cater for people in starkly different stages of the change process all in the same place? Quite simply, by regularly asking people, “where are you at?” and offering materials to match their headspace. The transtheoretical model of change says that there are five different stages of change: precontemplation, contemplation, planning, action, and maintenance. People in contemplation mode can easily fall back into precontemplation, if that’s the social norm. So for those thinking about change, it’s helpful to offer reinforcing messages. For example, when Joan walks into the drop-in centre, a Healing Guide meets her. Joan responds that she had a rough night, she hasn’t had a drink in 6 days and really wants one. Using a set of tools, the healing curator finds out what kind of environment would work best for Joan that day. Joan elects to spend some time in the aromatherapy room. In that room are pictures of people a bit like her, with quotes and stories. She’s given a pack with some nice music preloaded on a device.

#### **Alumni Connections (Modeling & rehearsal)**

How do you connect people to others who are further along in the healing process? By connecting people with ‘alumni members’ who have faced similar situations. A Reflector brokers face-to-face conversations, or sets-up an exchange via Facebook or text message. They have a bank of alumni stories to use, tagged by stage of change and circumstance. For example, James who has expressed a desire to reconnect with his family was introduced to Matt over Facebook. Matt used to come to the Drop-in, but over a two year period he reestablished contact with his mom. The Reflector first gave James a copy of Matt’s story, which the Reflector collected using a template. Self-efficacy theory tells us that modeling can be an effective way to build motivation and skills - but only if the people doing the modeling are ‘like you’ and their story feels believable.



#### **The fuller story (Barrier busting)**

Staff of Drop-in centers are often accompanying members to appointments with doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. How do we enable professionals to understand the complex realities of street-involved adults, and offer better-fit supports? A Reflector would go along to appointments equipped with stories to share with professionals. These are stories which give a fuller context of the person’s life, and are tagged by service encounters. Stories are coupled with an invitation for a further conversation with the Reflector to help the professional adapt their approach. We know from research on stigma that the best way to counter negative stereotypes is through more personalized, and contextualized encounters.



# Practice: Curious conversations

What we say to ourselves shapes the decisions we make. Our narratives - the stories we have in our heads about who we are, where we've been, and where we are going - change how we interact with the world around us. For many street-involved adults, their narratives can feel like a broken record: unchanging and holding them back.

Curious conversations help people reframe parts of their narrative, and take control of the next chapter of their story. These aren't conversations focused on problem solving or cheering someone up. Rather, they are conversations focused on the small exceptions, initiatives, and preferred developments. We call these a person's "project" - the little things a person is and intends to do differently in their lives. This is not a therapy session. It is a 1:1 dialogue where a staff member asks a set of reflexive questions, listens to the answers, and then shares back what they are taking away from what they heard - a process known as 'witnessing'.

We see curious conversations as a micro practice because it's about zooming into the individual's internal world and tapping into their inner monologue.

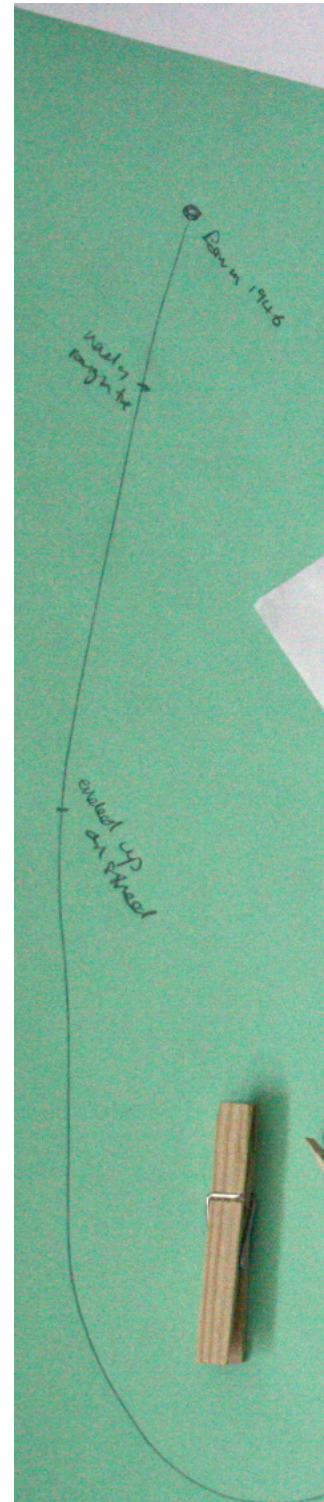
When Regan participated in a curious conversation she started seeing herself as a nurturer, not just a user. In the reflecting back or witnessing part of the conversation, the staff member shared how struck she was by her caring for others. Regan, who often feels guilty for leaving her kids, was positively reminded about the caring and nurturing side of her personality.

What makes this different from regular conversations? The conversation has an explicit intent. It is designed to help the person acknowledge their values, purposes, intentions, and steps forward. Curious conversations give individuals the space to safely engage in future-oriented reflective thinking, where they can express as much or as little as they want. Curious conversations do not delve into past traumas or triggers. Instead, they are one tool for helping people re-imagine themselves and re-locate their internal strengths.

## Outcomes

### Improved mental health

People report less symptoms of depression, and growing future orientation.







THIS DOESN'T INTEREST ME

Harriet

"For me a good day is taking better care of... to have these really amazing... like to look and feel good again."

Ryan

"My life would be better if I had more money."

George

"I'm thinking about what I'm going to leave behind when I'm gone. I want to be known for something other than that guy with a beard"



Martin

"Getting a job would be great if I got a job then I know I can make my life around and be what I would happen for me"



Angel

"For me a good day is feeling calm all the time"

Ma

"When would I want to be with my in 7 years"



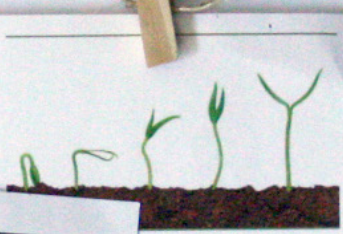
Patty

"It's to this before, but I want to be with someone to grow"

Tum

"At the moment I can't do anything"

"I want to be a doctor"



### FINDING OUT MORE

### STARTING A PROJECT?

### CURIOUS QUESTIONS

Are you ready to be curious? Jump into this experiment. These questions aren't about focusing on a person's problem, not about emphasizing with a person, not even to cheer lead them on. These questions are about finding out where a person sees themselves going.

When you hear them talk focus on exceptions, where the person has taken a step forward, and where the person has a sense of control. What are the underlying... pulling out? Try:

## HOW

### INVITATION



- Start by giving a member a formal invitation to a conversation.
- Use our invitation card or make your own.

Some things you might say are:

- “This is an invitation for me to listen to your story and share it back to you.”
- “We don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want, just what’s comfortable for you.”

### CHOOSE SETTING



Together with the member choose where you want to have this conversation. Ask yourselves:

- Will you be comfortable?
- Who else is around?
- Are there too many distractions?
- How long can you stay there?
- Do you have to buy something?
- Can you have a private conversation?

## WHY

Invitations make the exercise seem special, and communicate its purpose. This facilitates entry into the conversation, and helps to set bounds.

Curious conversations are meant to be a different kind of conversation. By changing the setting, you are subtly indicating to this person that this is going to be different. Settings play a key role in how people interact, and open up.



## HOW TO START



- As you are having a casual conversation keep an ear out for all the things that could be a person's "project".
- One way to initiate a deeper conversation is to share something about yourself. This does not mean that you become the focus of the conversation, rather, that by sharing you are expressing some kind of understanding of what they are talking about.

## WHAT PROJECT?



Use the outcome cards tool:  
First ask them to sort the cards into 2 groups- cards that "interest me and cards that don't". (Helpful hint-remember you can ask questions at any point. cards are there to help facilitate conversation, they aren't the exercise).

- Ask them to choose their top 3 cards in the pile that "interests me."
- Then ask "what is it about each card that interests them or resonates with them?"

## GOING DEEPER



Use the curious conversation tool to help you draw out a person's personal project.  
The pamphlet is divided into 3 sections of questions. Use some of these questions or write your own.

- Some of our favourite questions are:  
How do you want things to be different?  
What have you done that you're proud of?  
"I want to have a good life for myself" —> "What does that look like?"

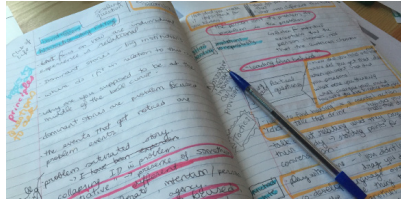
The questions selected focus on finding out what someone wants for their life moving forward. The questions are inspired by narrative therapy. The point isn't to focus on a person's problems and solve their challenges. Rather, it is to focus on their desired outcomes.

Questions are asked with specific language, in specific ways. These questions are influenced by narrative therapy practice, which is rich with metaphors.



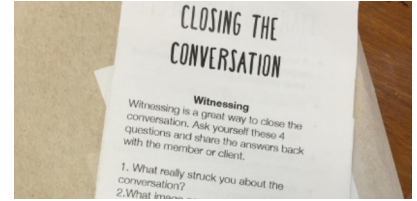
## HOW

### TAKING NOTES



- Jot down what the person tells you, include quotes, and words they use.
- If you don't feel comfortable writing and listening, ask if you can audio record the conversation.
- Categorize your notes during the session or afterwards with coloured pens. Categories could include 'expressed challenges', 'actions they are taking', and 'any mention of something they want to do differently in their life'.

### WRAPPING UP



To close the conversation use the “outsider-witnessing” technique. Answer the following 4 questions and share the answers back with the member or client:

1. What really struck you about the conversation?
2. What image comes to mind from this conversation? (if no image comes to mind skip this question)
3. What was it like for you to hear this from the person? (how did you feel during the conversation?)
4. What do you take away from this conversation? (i.e. what did you learn about yourself?)

## WHY

Writing notes is an important part of this practice because you will return a person's story back to them at a later time.

Organizing what they say into categories helps you reach further understanding of the information you have collected.

### GIVE BACK



As a closing gift leave the member something to spark remembrance of the conversation.

One option is to take one of the outcome cards that they found most interesting, fold it, and on the inside jot down one or two of the meaningful answers that came up in “outsider witnessing”.

Other things you can leave are mementos of the conversation such as 1 meaningful word written on a stone.

Don't know what to write? Put one of these phrases on a card:

- “I really admire x about you...”

Outsider Witnessing is a proven technique to help people see their story from someone else’s perspective. Hearing someone’s thoughts on what you just talked about can spark insights for you, provided these thoughts are motivating and non-judgemental.

### FOLLOW UP



In the days and weeks after the conversation you might follow-up and see how they are doing.

Ask them:

- Did the conversation spark anything for them?
- Have they been doing anything differently?
- Have they taken steps towards their project? What supports can you broker them to?
- There is always more room for curious conversations; these conversations can be repeated as they pursue their project, or identify a new project.

Underlying the theory behind brokering people to new supports and inspiration is ‘bridging social capital’ and the notion that informal resources have value. You can broker people to stories, articles, and other community members.

# Practice: Mary Poppins bag

The Mary Poppins bag introduces people to on-demand content and interactive exercises to (legally) stimulate the mind and expand people's points of view. The bag also provides people with concrete strategies and activities for relieving boredom or cravings.

The bag is filled with surprising pieces of content - everything from DIY mindfulness exercises to fictional excerpts to poems to scientific articles to musical podcasts and informative videos. The idea is that the Mary Poppins bag has constantly evolving content attractive to many segments. People are given choice and agency over what to read, watch, listen, and do.

We see this as a micro practice because it is about the individual, the choices they make, and the conversations they have.

When Vincent picked something out of the Mary Poppins bag, he surprised everyone by choosing a package of feminist poetry. It contained a few poems, each written in a different style, some suggestions for how he could write one himself, and a blank notebook & pencil.

We've found that the Mary Poppins bag is easy to implement and incorporate as part of a staff member's every day practice. With the Mary Poppins bag, staff or 'Learning Curators' gain access to a range of tools for calming emotions and introducing novelty.

The bag would not get stale. Fresh content would be regularly made and added. This is content that comes from members, libraries, community members, the Internet, really everywhere. Content is tagged to make it easy for Learning Curators to match a person's interest and state to what is available. With the Mary Poppins bag, idle conversations can turn into more meaningful moments.

## Outcomes

### Greater self-efficacy

People express greater control and competency (self-efficacy) over learning new things, and are empowered to make their own informal decisions.

### Increased coping mechanisms

People report greater awareness and usage of strategies and resources to redirect their thinking







## HOW

### ON THE LOOK OUT



- As a Learning Curator, you are always looking for opportunities to provide some new stimulation for members. You see your role as constantly introducing fresh ideas via a range of formats - paper, podcasts, video, games, etc.
- When you hear members say things like, 'I'm bored,' 'I'm anxious' or 'I'm sad' take this as a moment for connecting them with new content.

### MANY OPTIONS



- Use the many resources in your bag to introduce members to what's available. Resources are grouped by emotion, by topic, and by action (read, watch, do).
- Show the members the menu card and ask them to choose a piece of content that sparks their interest.

## WHY

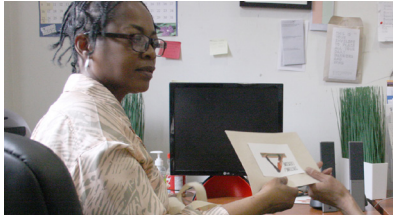


## GET THE ENVELOPE



- Pick the envelope that matches the content chosen from the menu.
- Envelopes come with instructions on the outside. Read the instructions to the member.

## MAKING SENSE?



- Chat with the member about what's contained inside, and answer any questions
- Decide whether they will do what's in the envelope on their own, or whether you will do it together

## TIME TO REFLECT



- Check-in with the member after they've used the content.
- You can ask: What struck them about the content they just encountered? How did it affect their mood? Would they recommend the content to somebody else in the drop-in? When? Why? What would they add to the bag?

People don't know what they don't know so by providing people with a menu of options you give them a taste of what is available as well as giving them choice.

Reflecting is a key component of any learning experience. It helps you understand what resonated and what did not. It also gives the individual a chance to be a co-producer in the practice.