

Room to Breathe – Thoughts (Jan 2024)

I felt good on the Room to Breathe walk today. A high of some kind. It may be significant that it is the start of the final year. The winter walk. There were three new (to me) members and ten of us in all. I felt the togetherness, the connectedness, the strength of the group. The group had a good day – it was doing its thing.

There is something heady about being part of a *good group* but as I reflect upon it now, after today's walk, I think that the power of the group can also involve its capacity to experience being the *difficult group*. Will we feel this in these final group walks? Just three to go.

I have a couple of memories from today. One of us, a clinician working in the NHS is approaching retirement and talked about how significant endings can be. Recently, she ended her work with a difficult patient of many years. The patient had changed greatly during this time and thanked her saying that her life had been saved. It was a good ending. I want a good ending too ... I'm sure we all do. We want to have good thoughts, remember the good that the group has done and remember the lessons we have learned. My second memory came from another health worker. She said how destructive remaining silent could be when there is something that should be said. It was advice borne out of her own life experience ... sound hard won advice. I thank her for this.

These things I will remember but there must be lots in the group that I and others have forgotten. Is this simply lost experience or might forgetting play an active part in the life of the group? The phrase: forgive and forget comes to mind. Forgetting is to *letting go* as remembering is to *holding on* – I think. Some things need to be held on to and some need to be let go of. Is the group the place for

forgetting ... and forgiving (chiefly oneself)? I want to say 'yes.' We are approaching the time for letting go of the group ... and other things perhaps.

Where am I? Wondering about feeling good in the group ... thinking about forgetting ... writing this and trying to get hold of – what? Being truthful to myself, I feel both joy and gloom at present. The walk with the group has let me see and feel the joy. It is the gloom, I need to see more clearly. Gloom, concern, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, foreboding, doubt, loss, lack of agency/belief/hope – and much more no doubt. These are some of the feelings which constitute my gloom. All sound very human to me ... what else could they be! But why?

Now, nearly two years after I wrote the above, I can look back and make some sense of what I felt at the end of that Room to Breathe walk. My *gloom* at the time (which I could not make sense of) now seems understandable for it was during these last two years that first, my wife became serious ill and, a year later I too was diagnosed with a serious illness. I did not consciously know about any of this on that Room to Breathe walk – it was waiting in the wings for me. Fortunately, my wife and I have responded well to our treatments ... I think our endings are still some way off. Of my thoughts following that January walk, I wonder if the *gloom* I felt, was an uncanny unconscious awareness of *difficult* times ahead? And, I wonder whether it was the group that helped put me in touch with this?

I value greatly my time in the Room to Breathe group. And, I am pleased that I managed to attend all four walks in our final year.