

CASE STUDY

"I'm a bookshop" Exercise Identity, creativity and imagination 2023 (reflections on an exercise from 2016)

The brief

At one of my very first workshops, I created a brand new exercise called, 'I'm a bookshop.' In the exercise I invite people to write - without thinking too much - about what they'd be like if they were a bookshop. I feed prompts throughout the exercise to help people think about where it might be, who the customers might be, the decor, etc. Often people describe their perfect bookshop, sometimes people 'are' the bookshop. It works either way.

Outcomes

Of all the exercises I have people do, this is without doubt the favourite. People just love the joy they feel creating their own rules, the chance to use their imagination and play - one person actually had no customers in her shop. Someone else had an underground bookshop. It empowers people knowing they have creativity and imagination at their disposal. It can even create a safe haven for people to return to, as with this example. Full disclosure, Nic and I still write together one to one, but I'd never heard her talk about her experience before and when she shared it, I had to share it with you.

Feedback

What I wrote was not actually that much. There was nothing beautifully descriptive or poetic about it (as I would have wished it might be!) but the feeling the experience left in me, that remain to this day, has been priceless.

The exercise left me feeling grounded. In doing it I finally recognised my ability for creativity. I discovered a richness to my inner world that delighted me and made me want to explore further. I never knew I could create my own world in my imagination.

Being my own creation, my bookshop gave me exactly what I needed, and still does. It is there for me to return to at any time. To safely explore its dark corners. Every visit offers a new opportunity for reflection, self study, contemplation and growth. And perhaps to choose a new book!

This special place doesn't pretend to be anything more or less, there is nothing contrived, no posing or masquerading, it doesn't intimidate, it gives me the feeling of being held in safety, encouraging relaxation of the ego state offering the freedom to simply be. no expectations no demands to be anything more than I am. A place to observe myself, a place for mindfulness, a place for kindness and self compassion, unthreatening, womb like. Nic

