



Tools for Reflection in Creativity

A Guide
by Elaine Kordys

Background

Elaine Kordys is a creative movement practitioner who works under the name of 'Spin Turn Creative Movement' alongside people living with a dementia diagnosis. Supported by the bold mini commission Elaine has explored approaches that aim to invite consultation and reflection with the creators she is working alongside. She is curious about the following:

- Can creative reflective processes be brought into the heart of an arts project to encourage deeper collaboration and equality?
- Can creative reflective tools allow for further self-expression and autonomy for people living with a dementia diagnosis?
- What creative reflective tools could be used and how?

This guide was devised through consultation with a number of creative practitioners, researchers, arts therapists and people living with a dementia diagnosis. Alongside this the tools were explored with co-researchers Jill Broad and Mary Donaldson both of whom have a dementia diagnosis and live in a carehome. Mary and Jill have been involved in a number of creative projects with Elaine most notably, Light Gatherers in 2021.

Who is this Guide for?

- Creative practitioners and activity coordinators who work with older people and people living with a dementia diagnosis.
- People living with a dementia diagnosis who may be drawn to developing a tool box of creative methods which encourage self expression.

Purpose

- To encourage user-led and person-centred engagement in response to individual and group interest.
- To have practical tools which can be used throughout a creative project to gather feedback and ideas.

The Tools!

- 9 tools have been selected and experimented with between Elaine, Mary and Jill. These tools give a variety of creative styles to suit people with different interests, levels of mobility, dexterity and interaction.



- This guide is an ongoing process of investigation by Elaine Kordys and is by no means finite. The tools may not work for everybody and should be used with a person-centred approach in mind. Different tools will suit different people and often at different times, you can learn together.

Luggage Labels

What are they?

Old fashioned-style luggage labels. They can be made from cardboard or pre-bought.

How to use them:

Everyone can be given a luggage label at the beginning of a session. The following question (or similar) can be written on the label or spoken: 'I would like to go somewhere...'

People are encouraged to write or draw a response to consider the question.

At the end of the session the same happens but the question on the label is: 'I have been somewhere...'

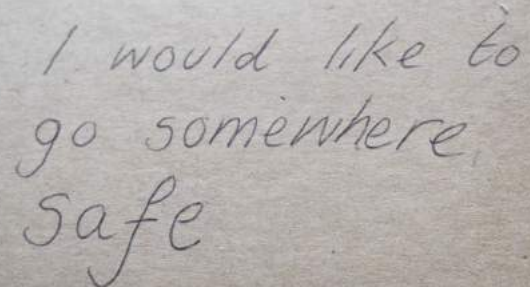
People can be invited to share their luggage label reflections. Names can be put on them and they could be placed in the working space for future reflection.

Why are they useful?

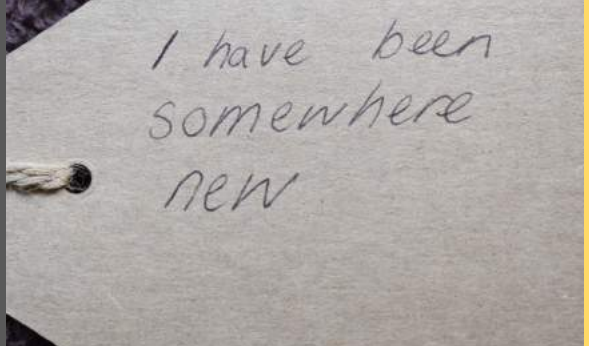
Luggage labels can be an effective way to transition in and out of a session. They can explore our relationship to the creative experience and how we feel whilst moving in and out of it. It is an opportunity to express our desires, hopes, anxieties, disappointments and celebrations as individuals and as a group.

Feedback on this tool:

'I'll need time to think about that one'



I would like to
go somewhere
safe



I have been
somewhere
new

Reflective Cards

What are they?

Cards with images and/or words which can be used to promote self and group reflection. Cards could be developed alongside a group with relevant words and images which suit the group or cards can be purchased in advance.

They are also available as an online resource at: www.internationalfuturesforum.com

How to use them:

The cards can be placed in front of an individual to choose or handed around a group to select. Individuals can be invited to share the card they chose and their thoughts around their selection.

Why are they useful?

The reflection cards can invite a new layer of contemplation and response to an activity, event or emotional experience. It can promote inner and outer dialogue which can support reflection on the events which have just occurred in a session.

Feedback on this tool:

'I like looking at these and thinking about these.'

'I enjoyed receiving my card as a gift, I wouldn't have picked it for myself.'



The World in your Hands

What is it?

A ball with the map of the world on it. These can be bought cheaply online in different sizes.

How to use it:

This tool can be used at any point in a session but may work well at the end. Individuals are encouraged to hold the ball and respond to a question such as: 'how does it feel to have the world in your hands?' or 'this is my world, and my world is ...'

Why is it useful?

Holding the world is symbolic, evocative and promotes shared expression and experience.

It can encourage expression in relation to one's present emotional experience.

Feedback on this tool:

'I like having the world in my hands, I like telling you about it.'

'This is my world and my world is content.'



The Hand Poem

What is it?

A hand poem is a simple technique to develop a short poem which encourages creative responses and stories.

How to use it:

Using your dominant hand, draw around the other hand. Suggest 4 prompts such as: 'what is your favourite: colour, season, animal and sound.' These prompts could be linked to the activity that you are doing such as 'what is your favourite music, movement etc'. Starting at the pinkie the answers are written in each drawn finger and any further thoughts/memories which may come from this. On the thumb the person's name is written.

The answers are then prefixed with 'I am', to make the poem. For example:

'I am cat, cuddly with a mind of my own, I am yellow, a bright yellow dress,

I am all seasons, some good, some bad, I am birdsong, it goes straight to your heart,

I am Diane'

The poems could be shared in the group or kept for private reflection.

Why is it useful?

Hand poems encourage self expression, imagination and reflection which can bring people together sharing experiences and their creativity.

Feedback on this tool:

'It surprised me.' 'It was more than I thought it would be.'



Talking and Listening

What is it?

This may seem obvious and is generally something that is done intuitively. However, the simple act of giving time to ask for someone's feedback and thoughts can get overlooked.

How to use it:

Simply being curious by asking questions and giving time for responses.

Ideas for light touch questions:

Let's share some ideas...

What shall we add to this?

Is there something you could teach us?

Is there something you would like to learn?

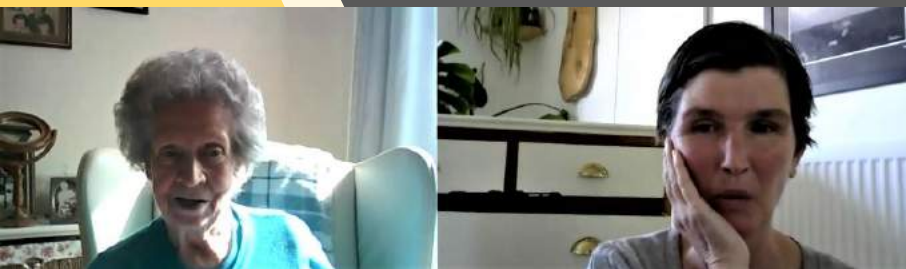
Why is it useful?

By not making assumptions on whether people are enjoying creative experiences one invites inclusion and autonomy for those involved. You may always find out something new!

Extra idea:

'Beautiful questions' are open ended questions with no right or wrong answers. For example, when looking at a picture one could say: 'if this picture could talk what might it say?' They can allow for new possibilities and curiosities which take the pressure away right or wrong answers or recall.

Please refer to the 'useful links' section for further information on beautiful questions.



Mirroring Movement

What is it?

Mirroring is when an individual's movement is witnessed, shared and qualities of it are recreated by another person or members of a group.

How to use it:

An individual can be invited to share a movement to express how they feel at that moment. The group are then invited to recreate this movement and do it simultaneously alongside the individual. This can be used at the start, close or at any pertinent time of a session. If helpful the mover can add words to their movements.

Encourage safety and for people to move within their own abilities.

Why is it useful?

Mirroring is an opportunity for witnessing and reflection in the here and now. It can be a powerful way to have deeper non-verbal understanding of and empathy for a person's experience.

Feedback on this activity:

'Thank you for naming that movement. That is exactly how I'm feeling.'

'My body was telling you.'



Photo Prompts

What is it?

Looking at photographs together of a previous session.

How to use them:

Photos can be taken throughout a session and then viewed in a following session. Share the picture to each person or present on a large screen. Give time for people to have a good look, comments and conversation may start naturally. The following prompts could be used:

'I wonder what the person in the photo is saying/thinking?' 'Is there a story here?'

'If this photo had a title, what could it be?'

Why is it useful?

Photo prompts are not memory tasks more so a new activity which will allow for reflection, new stories and interpretation. Photos can evoke conversation, revisit previous experiences or explore new experiences. It is an approach to gather feedback on elements of previous sessions which may help influence forthcoming sessions.

Feedback on this activity:

'I know those two old ladies, it's nice to see them again.'



Sensory Objects

What are they?

A selection of objects which can encourage emotional expression.

How to use them:

Objects can be brought to the session by the group or the facilitator. Take your time, look at and feel the objects with curiosity. Each person is encouraged to choose 1 or 2 objects which resonate with them. Try not to prompt the person, give time for exploration and response.

Suggestions can be offered such as:

'Which object would you choose to show how you're feeling right now?'

'Do any feelings come to mind when you hold that?'

An individual or group could develop an 'object box' which houses pertinent objects which can support the communication of emotions.

This tool should be approached with consideration to the emotional and physical implications of certain individuals.

Why are they useful?

Objects can act as symbols to express emotions, they can be charged with stories, experiences and embodied emotions. They can be an effective way to express an internal emotion to others.

Feedback on this activity:

'This objects reminds me of a time where I was happy and safe.'

'I have no feelings when I hold this'



Expressive Visual Art Making

What is it?

An opportunity to make marks or draw.

How to use it?

This can be used at any point in a session to encourage self-expression and reflection. Art materials can be selected that suit the needs and interests of your group such as pens, pencils, oil pastels and chalks.

Two potential starting points:

- Choose from one (or more) emotion, these may include: happiness, anger, fear, frustration, isolation, ease, comfort, love etc. One can then express a response to the chosen emotion using the art materials provided.
- Have one large sheet of paper in the centre of the group. In turns each person can choose a colour from the art materials to reflect their feelings at that moment. They are then invited to add a mark/drawing to the paper to generate a group picture.

It is important to give time for the making process and opportunities for people to share their thoughts. Once complete, there could be the invitation to speak further about the artworks, ones relationship to/reflections on them and the process of creating them.

Why is it useful?

Creating artworks can offer new perspectives into an experience or emotion. It offers a window of expression to the inner self and the possibility for this to be shared with others. It can be supportive for people who are less verbal.

Feedback on this activity:

'Well that was surprising'

'No thank you, I'll watch you drawing though and let you know my thoughts'



Useful links

www.internationalfuturesforum.com

‘We offer people a space for reflection, thoughtful engagement and mutual support and we freely share the powerful ideas, tools and frameworks that result.’

www.creativeandcredible.co.uk

‘The content and resources you will find here were developed and identified through a critical review of current evaluation knowledge and practice.’

www.timeslips.org

You will find a ‘Beautiful Questions Guide’ in the resources section of the time slips website.

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Credits: Magi Gibson and Lorna Hill for hand poem inspiration.

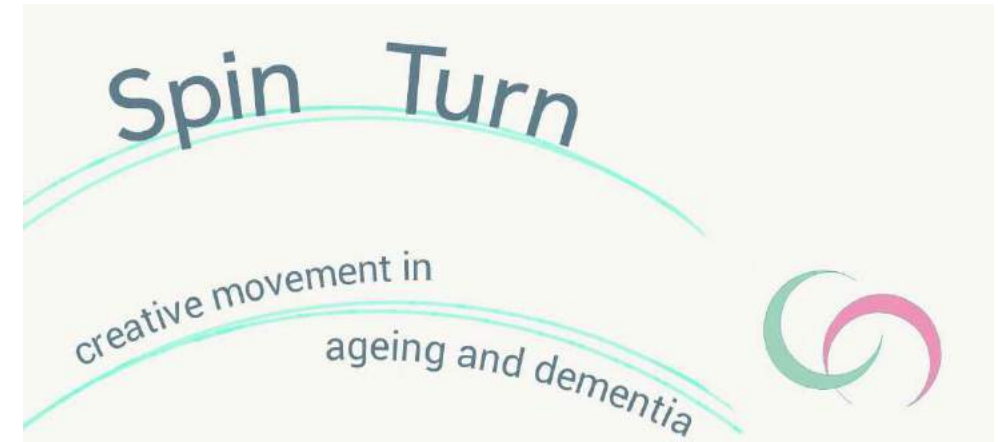
Anne Basting for 'beautiful question' inspiration.

Marion Chace for 'mirroring movement' inspiration.

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www.bold.org.uk

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