



Loving the gentle kind: Ubuntu-based Empowerment

Community Wellness Focusing Project

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Ubuntu is a concept that can bolster the empowerment of communities and Community Wellness tribe people in action. People with ubuntu are warm, generous, open and available to others, affirming others and willing to be vulnerable. Focusers can ask: how does ubuntu correspond to, and differ from, the Community Wellness Focusing approach?

The essence of the panafrikan philosophy of ubuntu speaks of interconnectedness: “My humanity is bound up in yours. I am because we are.” To speak in South African Xhosa language: “Umntu ngumntu ngabantu: I am person through other persons”. At the heart of the concept and practise of ubuntu is the value of inclusivity and reciprocity in relationship: Mutual respect, mutual caring, mutual sharing and a shared commitment to the ongoing work of harmonious living together. The human self is constituted not by the individual

sphere of competence but by the relations between. Ubuntu people speak of themselves in terms of the Kanton credo as “I participate therefore I am”.

“Ubuntu calls for cohabitation, which is not only about living with others harmoniously but also about accommodating other people's ideas, and genuinely seeking to understand before proceeding to persuade them ...Most often than not the word has been dichotomized along the lines of there's >me< and there's >you<. >You< are in that body over there, which is very different from mine. ... From a consciousness of separation the paradigm is >you're on your own<. >I've got mine. Get your own<. Ubuntu is this philosophy that comes in to renegotiate this caveat and to establish psychological, emotional and cultural platforms of convergence rather than divergence, of similitude rather than differentiation” (Emmanuel Mote-Ndasah, Duala, pastor of the of the Anglican Church of Cameroon in personal interview 2014).

The ethical and spiritual foundation of ubuntu offers high chances of development for those working in the field of Community Wellness. Sensitive listening for to understand and not for to reply, interpersonal responsibility and solidarity come first in the process of ubuntu based interrelating.

Starting and closing down a Focusing learning unit are good opportunities to practise Ubuntu Focusing UBF. Following ubuntu spirit we can ask e.g. “How does the whole of it show what is missing here?”. The missing “something” is the (... ..) to complete or to go further as group. What any participant is going to bring in to the whole of it is an expression of this missing “something” and therefore beyond validation. It is an expression of the wholeness (unity) though it is unique (diversity). It is free from any value as part of the heritage of human equality: We all come from the same source of living.

The practise of ubuntu attitude in Community Wellness Focusing makes Focusing trainers sensitive for the natural ubuntu resources of their participants: Their wanting to share and help each other, their longing for

coherent relationships and their eagerness to find happiness not only for themselves. Focusing trainers can facilitate the “we here” of any community group by adapting Focusing instructions to the natural expression of ubuntu of the group members. This works very well when Focusing trainers sense towards the atmospheres emerging within the community group they are working with.

Atmospheres are expansive holistic expressions of phenomena. They are unconcrete, vague and spread into what we call environment or aroundness (Fuchs 2000). Atmospheres and moods referring to personally felt “being-in-situation” (Gendlin: “how-are-youness”/Befindlichkeit) are unseparated experiencing. “We sense a special atmosphere in a room, we participate in this atmosphere, and at the same time we ourselves are in tune to this atmosphere from the inside” (Fuchs 2000).

If Focusing trainers are tuned in to their sense of atmospheres, their Focusing instructions match with the personal moods of their participants and the ubuntu spirit unfolding within the community group. A strong feeling of “we-here-in-situation” can emerge, carrying further the process of empowerment of all participants.

Proposals for ubuntu based Focusing/Community Wellness Focusing questions:

- How does the environment (aroundness, atmosphere) feel for your body?
- How does your body want to participate here?
- What does it need for you to feel connected here?
- What of the whole wants to occur now?
- What is missing here to complete?
- What does the whole need to be contributed by you?
- How does your neighbour's body want to be supported by you so he/she can contribute his/hers?
- What makes a difference to fulfillment now?

Focusing Service Tübingen prefers to use the term “Community Wellbeing” to respect the processing that takes place in the group of the Focusing Oriented Ubuntu Relation FOUR project that runs in Tübingen since 2015. Four is focused on practising Ubuntu Focusing UBF in order to activate human resilience of volunteers working in refugee aid teams and in church communities. The spiritual basement for the monthly FOUR group meetings are the prayers of Desmond and Mpho Tutu (“Made for Goodness. And why this makes all the difference”, 2012). Whereas in general Focusing workshops each participant takes home his/her own symbol of resource and resilience, participants of FOUR happen to go home with empty hands but their fellow participants carrying home two or three symbols they got from the group for greater neediness.

FOUR and Ubuntu Focusing UBF is a work in progress. Questions and ideas are welcome. Please send to focusing-service@email.de

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