

**Reflection by Mary Brehaut, Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

***Reflection on activities with sound and movement – exploring the potential in literacy programming***

Last time I talked about the idea of using music and sound - to sing our stories into a new place. I think there is power in bringing in movement as well - to dance our stories. Telling our story through the body, through dance, to express how we physically feel about a word, a phrase, a story.

I was thinking about Annie Rogers' quote: “our bodies and our acts tell our stories when we have no words to communicate them” and thought it might be empowering to try to tell our stories consciously and deliberately through the body - to dance our stories.

It feels like we have a lot of powerful resources within us - and when we combine them and use them deliberately, we increase our chances of shifting our stuckness. If we combine personal story with the deep breathing necessary for singing or moving, the cardio involved in dancing or exercising opening up our emotions, and music which touches our soul - whether it's our own story-song or lyrics and sounds that move us - it could be a powerful way to break through some of our numbness and really feel the feelings around our story - whether its rage, sadness or fear.

There are so many combinations of arts based storying we could do:

-we could sing our stories (the hopeful ones not the stuck ones) onto a tape and listen to them on walkmans while out walking or exercising, letting them penetrate at a deeper level

-we could tell stories while we're moving - a walk and talk group, unlocking feelings in our bodies as we move

-we could dance our story to music - stretching it, collapsing it, expanding it, embracing it, exaggerating it, releasing it, re-memorizing it, rebuilding it, physically integrating the pieces of it, etc.

-we could play with movement and sounds and words that feel rooted, grounded, balanced, centred, fluid, – and insert our stories in different ways into this groundedness.

An immediate barrier that I can see to using movement is the enormous amount of physical pain that people are dealing with, which needs to be respected. In yoga and stretch breaks in our program, people participate if and when they choose and only to the degree that they feel comfortable. Physical expression may not be for everyone but, facilitated skillfully, in a safe group or privately, it might be a useful way to support the expression of self and story.

*Extract from Reflection February*

Extract from online post reflection on activities for OISE graduate course:

***Women, Violence and Literacy Learning 2007***