

## ***Janus Gate – Exercise to enhance the learning in the moving on process***

Transitions can be very tough for people who have had complicated experiences with attachment. Getting scared and leaving, being forced to leave, being left... all these things can come up as memories, conscious or unconscious, when courses or intensive workshops wrap up. Sometimes it seems like a group works so hard to find trust and cohesion, then as soon as that intimacy is established, boom! - The course is over and people have to move on to the next stage of schooling or work.

A healthy sense of closure is extremely important in these cases. Learners might feel like all the progress they made was only possible in THIS safe space, with THIS magical group of friends, with THIS wonderful teacher. People need to know that they can take all that good stuff with them – because it came from within them in the first place.

This exercise, created by psychodrama therapist Liz White can be modified to fit any size of group. In it, learners choose different people from the class to be proxies that speak aloud the things that they are taking with them, and the things they are ready to leave behind. It is a way for learners to see what they have learned and are taking with them; a way to make the future feel more exciting and less scary. It is also a way for learners to show one another what they have meant to each other, and a way to contain and normalize the very powerful feelings of loss, fear, and excitement that come with the end of a good course and the process of moving on to something new.

### **The exercise:**

This exercise is very structured and contained. Each person has the experience of naming some key aspects of the past year, some thoughts about the future, and the words that their strongest supporter would say to them about what they have accomplished. Then, most important of all, they listen to these words said by others.

Depending on the time you have, the size of your group and how well they work in small groups you might do this exercise as a whole group, divided into groups of 5, or even in pairs. In a small group each person will take a turn at being the “protagonist” (P) - the person who speaks their truths - and the “director” (D) – the person who leads the process and tells the protagonist what to do next. Other members of the small group, or class play the roles – the “looking back” (LB) person, the “looking forwards” (LF) person, and the “ally” (A) or cheerleader.

If you plan to work in small groups you will need to demonstrate the process first and to watch the groups carefully to make sure each person is getting the full experience. If you ask the group to work in pairs, the second person plays all the roles. In that case you can stand in the

middle of the room and walk them through the steps, all at about the same time. The partner listens and plays back all roles when the protagonist has finished and is watching.

**Directions:**

Say to the group:

*Keep it absolutely simple, from the heart and quiet. No one has to understand the context or exact meanings of your statements. Speak simply, with feeling, and try to let go of the worry about doing it "right". You can choose to write things down or not. Trust the empathy and memories of the class.*

1. Take two chairs and place them back to back.
2. The first person to take on the lead role – the protagonist (P) - chooses which chair she wants to use for looking forward and which for looking back.
3. P chooses another learner who will play her looking back (LB). That learner stays put and listens carefully.
4. P takes the looking back chair and the director (D) interviews him or her, saying:

*You are looking back over the last period in your life (this course, or this program, or this year as appropriate):*

*Name 3 words to describe this period.*

*Name 2 strengths that you have gained from this experience.*

*Name 1 thing you are ready to let go of (as in habits ready to die, characteristics ready for transformation- something you're ready to be done with)*

5. LB takes their place in that chair and waits, getting into that role.
6. P chooses a second fellow learner to play the looking forward role (LF). That learner stays put and listens carefully
7. P sits in the chair that's facing the future. D interviews P about looking forward:  
  
*Briefly describe what you see as you look ahead - one or two things? Something you are excited about? Afraid of?*
8. Learner who was chosen to play LF takes their place in that chair and waits, getting into the role.

9. D brings P to stand behind the two chairs – looking at the past and future. D tells P

*Think of someone, alive or dead, who would really understand this transition – the move you are making right now - and its significance to you.*

10. Choose a third fellow learner to play this role, a person who is an ally or cheerleader (A). That person stays put, and listens carefully.

11. D. interviews P in that role.

*What is your name? What is your relationship with the protagonist? You have seen this transition period in the life of the protagonist. What message do you have for him/her?*

12. A stands in that third position behind the 2 chairs.

13. D brings the protagonist out of the scene and they stand together as the director repeats the interviews with each person playing a role. They repeat as closely as possible the words that the P used (or can read from notes the P made if they need to or the P wants them to).

14. D speaks to P

*Take it in, quietly, and take a moment. How is that for you?*

Move on to the next protagonist....

When everyone has had their turn as protagonist, take a few minutes to see how everyone is feeling and to close the class together.