

# Documentation

Another option for rich story development via helping stories endure

“These practices of the written word document the more sparkling events of people's lives and in so doing contribute to 'rescuing the said from the saying of it',” (Michael White 2000, p.6).

“When we speak, our utterances fly by as events like any behaviour; unless what we say is inscribed in writing..” (Geertz, 1980 p. 31)

# Considering the ethics of documentation

‘...psychiatrists will assess recovery with measures that mean very little to the client. A good example of this is the continual use of symptom rating scales as an outcome measure. These scales tell us things like whether the person is still hearing voices, but will not tell us if they can now cope with them.’ (Coleman, 2011, p. 31)

# Living Documents

1. Documentation using the following purposes:
  - a) Finding our stories through the stories of others
  - b) Finding our stories through contributions to others
2. Exploring both individual (Sam) and collective options ('How we deal with "Way Out" thoughts') for creating these documents
3. Principles of living documents and documentation more generally.

# Finding stories through the stories of others

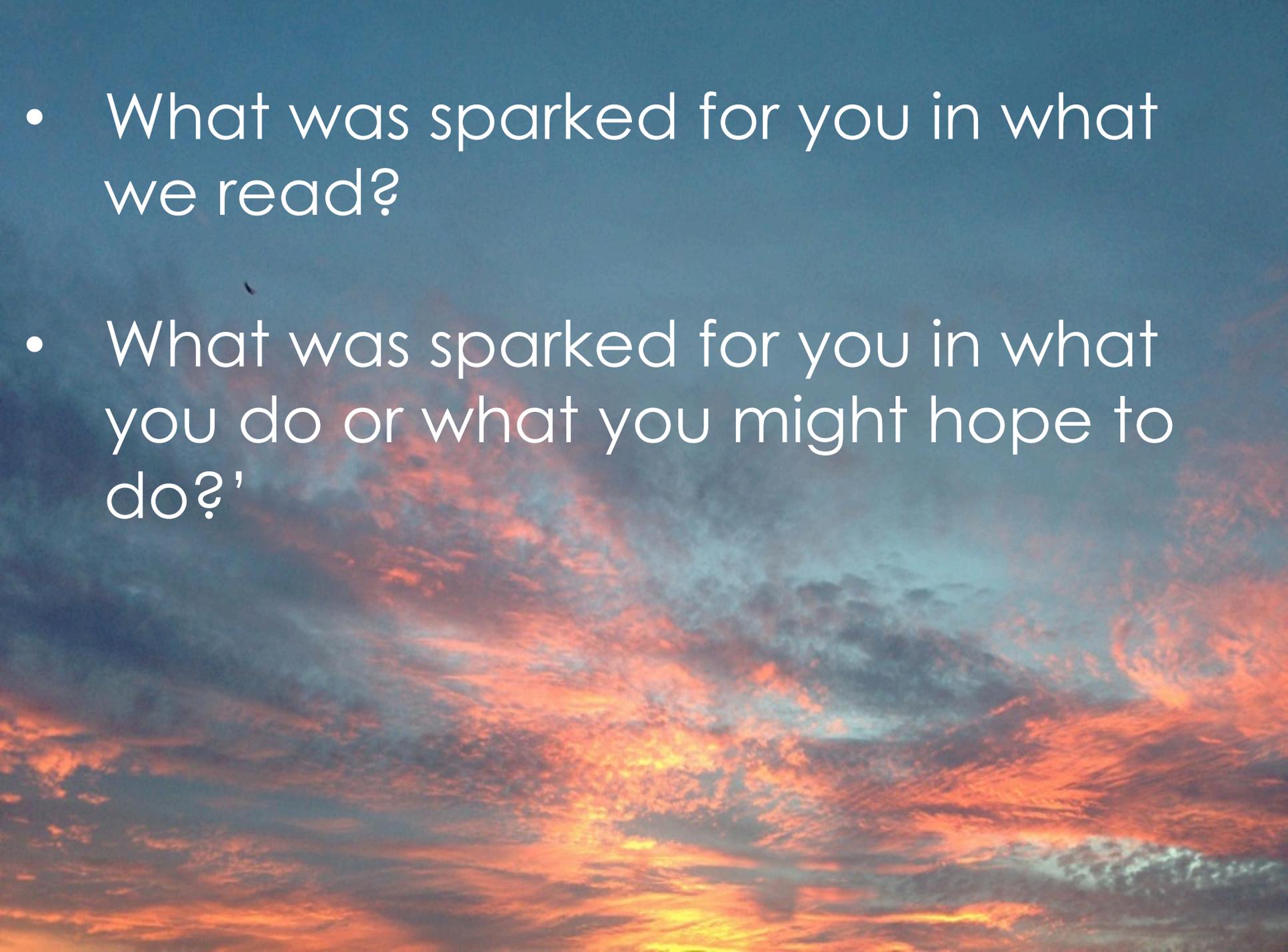
I believe in fiction, in the power of stories because that way we speak in tongues. We are not silenced. All of us, when in deep trauma, find we hesitate, we stammer; there are long pauses in our speech. The thing is stuck. We get our language back through the language of others. We can turn to the poem. We can open the book. Somebody has been there for us and deep dived the words. (Winterson 2012 p. 9)

# **Collective story collection: finding our stories through the stories of others**

## **When I can't live for myself I live for my family**

I can live for others too. When I can't live for myself I live for my family. Experiencing daily suicidal ideas can overshadow everything the people who look after me have done. But looking back on every hard experience I see that mum has been by my side. I look back on Christmas day last year, I was ready to die and I had a plan. I sat on the floor panicking and screaming and telling my mum to leave me, to leave the house, but she just wouldn't. I have a support system who have unconditional love for me despite everything I've been through and put them through. To take my life would disrespect everything my mum and my family have done for me.

- What was sparked for you in what we read?
- What was sparked for you in what you do or what you might hope to do?'



# I'd be throwing away other's investment

I resonate with living for others. I think about my family, friends, partner, doctor and psychologist. They have been there, they have listened, they have clothed me, given me a house, provided schooling and so much more. They have invested in me. By throwing away my life I'd be throwing away an investment. I don't want to do that. I remember having a chat with a nurse a few years ago when I was giving blood. I remember thinking at the time, 'what would I rather, to die now and end up as worm food that wouldn't last long or utilise the fact that I have a healthy body?' I want to utilise my healthy body and not to throw away such investment. I don't want to let the dark days take hold of me; I want to contribute by helping others.

# Finding our stories through contributions to others

Structuring the work so people speak 'through us' not 'to us':

- Centring the knowledge of those we meet
- People become consultants
- Speaking collectively rather than individually which brings:
  - **Potential diversity of responsibilities;** 'acting on behalf of others' / 'acting on behalf of myself'
  - **Potential diversity of purposes;** 'make a contribution' / 'get my point across'

# Sam's story

- Interview with Sam
- Knew he was going to end his life when he left the unit and was withdrawing from 'treatment'
- The act of 'withdrawal' was multi-intentioned and could be honoured
- Worker response as inviting a contributing to the collective document 'How we deal with the "Way Out" thoughts'
- Worker response as documenting the problem story, the story of how hard it gets.

# Principles of narrative documentation

- Rescue expressions that:
  - are vivid or poetic,
  - offer hope,
  - suggest a skill someone uses or a knowledge about life someone holds, or
  - suggest what is important or of value for people
- Record direct quotes
- 'Storytelling rights' belongs to the person
- Always seek feedback about the effects of the written word
- Slow conversations down
- Consider audience and where documents may be stored