

The Art of Int[e]ra-becoming

*From 'hole' to 'towards whole':
integration as a recalibration- not the destination*

Kim L. Swan



Part 1

Dedicated to
Kiara and Zoë

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integration as a recalibration- not the destination*

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PART ONE

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Professional Doctorate in Therapeutic Arts Practice

The MIECAT Institute Inc.

March, 2024

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-2024-

Figure 1: Swan, K., (2023). Cover image. *The Art of Int[e]ra-becoming - From 'hole' to 'towards whole': integration as a recalibration - not the destination.* [Photograph]

ABSTRACT

The Art of Int[e]ra-becoming

From 'hole' to 'towards whole': integration as a recalibration- not the destination

This research begins as an inquiry into how four co-researchers working collaboratively using the arts explore their experience of feeling stuck in patterns that no longer serve them well. The clear aspiration at the outset is to undertake research that supports healthy and integrated ways of being and doing that will inform therapists who work relationally, creatively and with a focus on the present moment. Viewing integration as “the linkage of differentiated parts” (Siegel, 2012b; Siegel, 2023), the research reveals how engaging in processes and procedures of experiential, multimodal co-inquiry can be integrative and support a recalibration from patterned rigidity or chaos towards harmony- within and without. As the co-researchers honour differences and cultivate linkages across various domains of experiencing, they foster a deep appreciation for each other, the ability to remain in empathic dialogue, and a knowing of the other as simultaneously differentiated and connected.

The research takes the form of an exegesis (Parts 1 and 2) and three artefacts in the order of a collaged book, a magazine, and an animated video.

The first of the three artefacts, a collaged book titled *Re-drawing the Hand we were Dealt: the art of attending to process*, is intentionally the rawest and is created by the author to reflect the experience of the messy, layered, non-linear nature of making sense of living experience. It illustrates the immediate, nuanced, and detailed unfolding of the co-inquiry process with one co-researcher. *On Becoming Super- the back story*, is the second artefact and is, by design, more integrated in its presentation. This artefact illustrates the ethico-onto-epistemological orientation of the research and the refinement of methods. The third and final artefact is the most integrated and succinct in form. It is a stop-motion animated video titled, *From Overdoing to Undoing: the art of letting go*, demonstrating how data can be reduced to a creative and meaningful essence for the co-inquirer and researcher.

The exegesis initially discusses what became known about the nature of entrenched patterns of experiencing, how we get stuck and what keeps us in ruts of outmoded, unhelpful ways of being and doing. The research documents a meaningful exploration through the identification, clarification, differentiation and linkage (integration) of the core elements held within dissonant patterns of

experiencing. Building upon Lett's (2011) work, the primary researcher develops and refines the methods of inquiry, including a process of mapping that articulates the complexity of a pattern.

The exegesis then considers how integration is significantly fostered and supported by enacting and cultivating an atmosphere of Loving Presence (that includes resonance and empathic attunement, awareness, attention, curiosity, openness, acceptance and flexibility) in the relational field of co-inquiry. The research reflects and highlights an orientation of *int[e]ra-becoming*- (including the human, more-than-human and non-material worlds). It articulates the significance of focusing attention on both content and process, attuning to the present moment, having a descriptive attitude, being reflexive, responding to others from a place of embodied resonance, and finally taking into account and inquiring into how and when the body moves as the arts-based inquiry unfolds.

Keywords: stuck; dissonant patterns; rigidity; chaos; therapeutic arts practice; loving presence; integration; becoming; intra-connected; MIECAT; multimodal co-inquiry; harmony; inter-being; embodiment; process

DECLARATION

Except where reference is made in this text, this work contains no material extracted in whole or part from a work for the award of any other degree or diploma.

This work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received approval from the MIECAT Human Research Ethics Committee in December 2013.

Name: Kim L. Swan

Signature:

Date: 1st March, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt acknowledgement goes to the traditional custodians of Djaara country, the unceded country where I live and practice. I also recognise the traditional custodians of Yorta Yorta, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri country, where much of this research was conducted. I see and pay my respects to traditional elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge Indigenous peoples' loss, resilience and sovereignty. Country, you have held me through this process; we are part of each other's landscape.

12 years is a long time to generate gratitude for the tribe who co-created an environment for something like this to be conceived, gestated and birthed into the world. It's been a prolonged labour of love and an incredible team effort. There are many folks who are not named here, who knowingly or not, contributed to my well-being through this project in the most meaningful ways. Thank you.

Liz, Clare and Eliza

You have been with me in this in one way or another for eleven years, since the apparent doctoral seed in me showed signs of sprouting. Your willingness to be alongside me as co-researchers/inquirers, to immerse in a multimodal exploration of "stuckness and patterned ways of being" has made all the difference... Thank you for your commitment to me, to those who will engage with what has come through, and for being prepared to share the preciousness of your process with the broader field to contribute to a better world in some small way. Thank you for trusting me and being so trustworthy- I cherish each of you and am forever grateful.

Warren

Dear Warren, you first dropped the tiny doctoral seed in the field of 'just beyond my known'. It quietly nestled there and eventually popped a little sprout of possibility into the MIECAT space. I will always be grateful for how you encouraged me in your role as supervisor and friend until you unexpectedly left this world. The ripple of losing you at MIECAT was unspeakable for so many reasons. The fact that you were part of the initial shaping of my unwieldy ideas and data and could stay curious when things got way too big to make sense of stays with me. I feel blessed that I got to share some of the final years of your life in this way.

Jan

Oh my goodness, Jan! You take the prize for endurance as my primary research supervisor after Warren's death... a role you gracefully inhabited for way longer than anyone should have to supervise someone. "Thank you" is grossly insufficient to express what I must convey. Jan, as you were stepping back from your role as Director at MIECAT, you honoured your commitment to me (and the other doctoral candidates at that time), navigating the unplanned solo-supervision gig with such generosity while we waited for

reinforcements to support you. The whole way through, you offered grounded wisdom as we wrangled chaos into some sense of order. You were committed to the worthiness of the research from the beginning, encouraging me to hang in there while offering me provocations that would grow me as I responded. You are not only a professional and creative inspiration, advocating for the arts wherever possible and in the most delightful ways, but you embody what it is to indeed "stay with".

I look forward to the nature of our connection opening up again to incorporate random acts of kindness and multimodal mayhem with friends we haven't yet met!

Ari

Who knew when we stepped into the MIECAT Grad Dip class 2008 as newbies that you would end up mid-wifing me through the final years of this doctoral research! I can't imagine how it must have been for you to have been unexpectedly invited to step into the role of second research supervisor when I was already nine years into the project... I naively assumed that your involvement would primarily be to support me in gently refining what was (I thought) already a fullish first draft... eh-hem... You model what it is to nurture integration: sitting with the many fragments (me being one of them), and supporting me to connect disparate aspects of the data in ways that shifted everything to a more coherent frequency. Even though this led to a restructuring of Part 2, I can now say that I believe it was worth it! Your enthusiasm and belief in the worthiness of the research itself were unwavering and you too, reminded me of how far I had come whenever I was ready to walk away from it all. I feel blessed to have encountered you for your patience, heart-felt guidance, generosity of spirit (and generosity of note-taking during supervision sessions), brilliant mind, your willingness to be part of my village, and for what I experienced as your love.

Kiara, Zoë, Miles, Marta, Bronnie & Cinta

Your help crafting what became the artefacts and exegesis has been phenomenal. Thank you for being my hands when the art of graphic design (Miles, Marta, Kiara, Bronnie and Cinta), animation (Kiara) and music recording (Zoë) extended beyond my level of expertise. I am incredibly grateful for your listening skills, patience, artistry and willingness to collaborate, adapt and adapt again until we landed with what we have here.

Amanda

Having someone with you in the trenches of something so monumental is life-changing. Peers, work-colleagues and friends, we became ZOOM doctoral study buddies across the ditch when you moved back to Aotearoa from Australia. We started the doctoral journey at the same time. When you completed a year before me, your uplifting encouragement contributed to my willingness to see it through, even when the idea of pulling it together felt impossible. Thank you for the early-morning and late-night shifts as we sifted through our data, shared health challenges and sorted some more. I am beyond grateful for your genuine friendship and look forward to more non-studious adventures in the future!

Antonello

What can I say? We were partners when I started this endeavour in 2013, and our relationship has changed during the life of the doctorate. You were one of the closest to the seemingly never-ending process of the research, and you were in a way, in relationship with the doctorate AND me for nine of the eleven years we were together. Your genuine encouragement came from your heart, and I am deeply grateful to you for being my trusted friend. If you're reading this, I'm relieved that I can finally tell you I've finished.

"MIECAT"

A kind of "Hogwarts of Naarm", I can't imagine where I would be were it not for you. The resonance I experience with your approach has shaped me in ways I could never have imagined. I feel deeply grateful to and inspired by the artistry of those researchers who have gone before me- whose work has been inspirational. I acknowledge that my focus is less on the finery of the art making but more on the relationality with the arts in the therapeutic setting and I am warmed that under your roof, all these ways are valid and valued. I'm grateful for the extended leave that I could take to bring this research to fruition- and I am delighted to offer the culmination of our combined efforts back to you in the form of the exegesis and artefacts.

To my colleagues and the MIECAT students (past and present)

Wow, thank all of you for putting up with the amount of time it took me to finish and for adapting to how this impacted my needs at work over the years. To those of you who companioned me at times to get to know better what I was working with, or encouraged or hugged me when I needed it, I thank you. I felt like "the boy who cried wolf" for much of the time, yet I appreciate your sincere interest in how it was all going- your care landed... Thanks for hanging in there with me- I hope that something in this enriches your work as you continue to enrich mine.

Daylesford-Hepburn Community

Moving out of the city to rural Victoria for the final two years of this process has supported my well-being- heartfelt thanks to those of you who make my life richer. To the regular "Dawn Trippers" (aka "The Fink Plamingos")- Jules, Devon, Syd, Caro, Franziska, Dean, Jean-Marc and Max, meeting you each morning at the Lake for a swim- year-round has been a wellspring of nourishment for me. Thanks for inquiring about the daily tasks left to do over warm tea and foot-baths, and for being super generous as I repeated the same thing every morning... Your genuine care and encouragement have been instrumental in my feeling supported as I completed this. Sarah, Meg and Patrick, and Su (who told me to quit and start living), the women from the FCOL circle, Petra and other bookclub enthusiasts, all committed to co-creating "the more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible" (Eisenstein, 2013), I can't even begin to let you know what your influence in my life means to me. Deanne and Jules, thank you for providing the perfect haven for me to complete the research, and to Jules, wholehearted thanks to you for your practical counsel and warm friendship over Backgammon, endless cups of chai and through a constant stream of "motivational memes..." - so much gratitude.

My family and loving friends

Mum, Dad, Deb, Kelly, John-Paul and Beth, I'm not sure who will celebrate more- you or me after this. Thanks for being present to everything my decision to “do yet more study” has meant for you. The doctorate has been a constant companion through the births and deaths of family members and friends since 2013. I have felt and been truly grateful for your prayers, support and love while I followed my need to do this. To Kimmy, Michele, Jandy, Bronnie, Lib, Treen, Annie, Jude and Adie; thank you for your friendship and for being the best cheer squad anyone could hope for. Again, I feel your love for me, and it is reciprocated. May we enjoy open-ended time with one another over un-rushed cups of tea, arts-making and plant-based meals, walks in nature and the odd movie marathon here and there ;). Luna and Bear (my feline family) get ready for way more snuggle time in front of the fire, and Lyra (my canine family)- longer walks in the bush and swims are on the way!

Uncle Joe

Dear Uncle Joe, it's done. It's actually done. Your practical generosity supported me to get to the finish line. Not many days pass without me feeling deep gratitude for how this changed my life. I remember your husky, wide-eyed declarations of hope that I would finish in those last couple of years of your life. I didn't complete it while you were still alive, but I trust you know I eventually got there.

Kiara and Zoë

I am beyond deeply grateful to you both for being present to me and ‘the doctorate’ for over a third of your lives... Your tolerance and support in uncountable ways have been exceptional. I can't even begin to communicate what's here- other than to say, let's get the band back together and start singing up a harmonic storm! My love and appreciation for you are more than words will ever capture.

To the Readers

You have quite likely been most influential in supporting me to stay with this to completion. The thought of your existence and the possibility of you glean something of value to use in your practice or personal life was enough fuel for me to show up to whatever task was at hand. Here's to co-creating a more integrated world, within and without. X

And finally, to the doctorate

Thanks for choosing me to bring you through this way at this time. I'm so glad to finally meet you in this form- wow, you've grown...

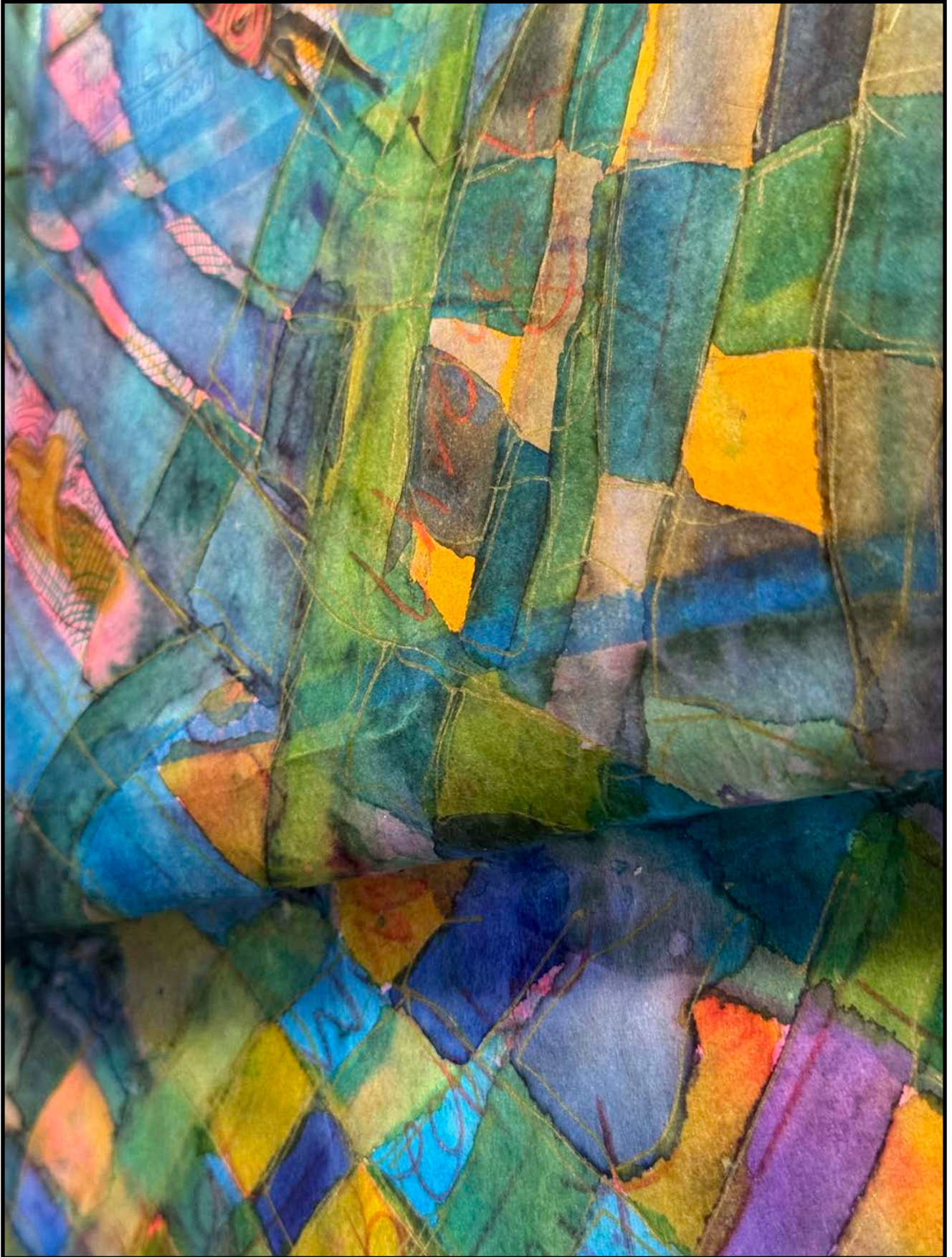


Figure 2: Swan, K., (2014). *Many strands come together*. [Watercolour, pencil and pen on paper]

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From 'hole' to 'towards whole': integration as a recalibration- not the destination

Part 1- The Painful Art of Being Stuck in a Rut

Section 1.0

Landing together- an orientation



Figure 3: Swan, K., (2018). *Landing together*. [Watercolour and black marker on paper]

Hello, I'm so pleased to finally meet you here on the page; I've taken the scenic route to get to this place. This orientation aims to support you, dear reader, in getting your bearings as you prepare to engage with this work.

We are here.

From 'hole' to 'towards whole': integration as a recalibration- not the destination reflects an eleven-year-long research into exploring deeply engrained, dissonant patterns of experiencing that my co-inquirers (Liz, Clare and Eliza) and I felt stuck in and unable to shift. This exegesis presents what we think we came to know, how we came to know this and what we might do with what stays with us. Our meaning-making is grounded in an emergent, relational, collaborative, multimodal and process-oriented approach to co-inquiry, known as 'The MIECAT form of Inquiry' (Lett, 2011). Privileging experience as a primary way of knowing, the MIECAT approach is deeply rooted in clear yet non-prescriptive processes and procedures, as evidenced throughout this research. These emerge from and are guided by the experience that unfolds in shared inquiry. I embrace this approach as the ground from which all the research becomes. Alongside others who have studied, taught and researched at MIECAT, I know this way of being and doing to offer deep, wide and full levels of relational expression that contribute to new knowing. As our search for meaning unfolds, we find this method conducive to fostering integrative processes that contribute to a sense of inner harmony within and between aspects of ourselves. This recalibrating ripples out to reshape our relationships with others in our lives in more attuned and connected ways. We hold the shared hope that the fruits of our collective efforts have generated something of value for others who find themselves entrenched in ways of being and doing that feel incongruent with preferred ways of living. May our offering support you and those who work with you to find more harmonious pathways to travel.

The research comprises this written exegesis and three accompanying artefacts, where each co-inquirer's process highlights different aspects of interest and value. What we learned from our collaboration is drawn from what is held in the artefacts.

Artefact # 1.

Liz's content and our shared relational unfolding process come together in a collaged book titled *Re-drawing the Hand We Were Dealt: The Art of Attending to Process*. This artefact speaks to one way of making sense of entrenched patterns and coming to better know our interconnectedness in an embodied way. Meaningfulness is made visible cumulatively- and reflects the non-linear nature of integrative practice. We see this through what unfolded for Liz and my process of finding a way to bring this book into form. It was important to me to reflect the untidy, bitsy-ness of our way of trying to make sense of entrenched patterns as I brought the detailed data of Liz's inquiry into this creative synthesis. This is the rawest of all three artefacts, as it highlights the many micro-nuances in our emergent, relational, collaborative, multimodal and process-oriented way of being and doing together.

Artefact # 2

On Becoming Super: The Back Story, the second artefact- is a magazine sprouting from co-inquiry with Eliza. It illuminates how Eliza comes to understand more about her relational patterns that don't align with how she prefers to be in her life. Contemplating what contributes to healthy relationships through the use of a companion-planting metaphor, one of Eliza's processes is "dropping seeds" (little sketches) into the field of

possibility (in the form of a multimodal journal) over time. As the co-inquiry develops, we witness how Eliza tends to these seeds with care, creativity, reflexivity and commitment. She watches as some of these seeds sprout and grow to become significant and meaningful for her. “Super Eliza” calls from the future, re-orienting Eliza to pathways towards preferred ways of being. These pathways grow underfoot with each intentional step and are wide enough for you to journey alongside as her process unfolds.

Artefact # 3

Finally, Clare’s inquiry is synthesised as a stop-motion animation titled *From Overdoing to Undoing: The Art of Letting Go*. This artefact depicts what stays with Clare from her quest to understand an engrained pattern of busyness that depletes her. Honing in on an internal relationship between two aspects of herself that Clare identifies as *the puppet* and *the puppeteer*, she voices what matters most as their relational pattern becomes better known, eventually transforming this relationship into something more harmonious. Harmony is a theme that runs through Clare’s inquiry and is expressed as Clare and I sing Clare’s chosen songs as part of the animation. We sing the story of the sense she made. Our voices attune and come together in consonance for the most part, with inevitable discordant moments, too, reflecting the *content* of the inquiry enacted through the recording process.

As I create each artefact and weave the threads of meaning in this accompanying exegesis, I meet aspects of myself that are blindly caught in patterns not conducive to overall well-being. The small child part of me is terrified that unless every single thing is made visible, then what matters will be missed. She still calls for my attention regularly. She needs much reassurance. It takes a long time for her to trust that it is okay to finish and move beyond this research...

The exegesis is structured in two main parts. The first section orients you to the study and looks at the painful art of being stuck in a rut through the following three lenses:

- The nature of a pattern- in particular, what we think we know about patterns at the beginning of the research; the discovery of common elements held in dissonant patterned ways of being; and a breakdown of elements that emerge as significant to dissonant patterns.
- How we get stuck and
- What keeps us stuck.

This is followed by Part 2, which considers Ways of Being and Doing conducive to integration. Part 2 begins with:

- A philosophical positioning, looking at “int[e]ra-becoming” as the axio-onto-epistemological orientation underpinning how I bring myself to the research.

From here, what emerges as findings through the research falls under the categories of Ways of Being and Ways of Doing that we find to be integrative. In the Ways of Being section, I identify the significance of:

- Loving Presence as an optimal atmosphere for integrative co-inquiry. Here, I describe qualities of loving presence that shape the co-inquiries in meaningful ways.

Finally, Ways of Doing is a practical examination of:

- Particular processes and procedures that are embodied through the research sessions and are found to be profoundly integrative.

What and how I come to know through the study informs possibilities for how this knowing might be applied across various contexts. My heartfelt wish is that what is explored and cultivated here contributes to more harmonious ways of being for you and those around you.

By way of navigation, I invite you to please pause reading the exegesis at this point and request that before returning to this document, you engage with the artefacts in the following order:

1. Liz's artefact- Re-drawing the Hand we were Dealt: the art of attending to process
2. Eliza's artefact- On Becoming Super: the back story, and finally
3. Clare's artefact- From Overdoing to Undoing: the art of letting go

In considering how you may interact with the artefacts, I have outlined possibilities in each introduction. Eliza's magazine is the most comprehensive, and I imagine you spending most time with this artefact. Once you have had time to be with the artefacts, please return here to continue!

- gratefully, Kim.

Section 1.1

The painful art of being stuck in a rut: dissonant patterns as signposts



Figure 4: Swan, K., (2013). *In the Hole*. [Watercolour, pastel and pen on paper]

Why is this topic so important to me?

As I give this question to my body for contemplation, David Whyte's (2012) words keep surfacing as though they need me to listen. This poem touches something deep inside me about my experience of feeling stuck in entrenched patterns that don't align with how I wish to be in my life... and how the research came to be.

SOMETIMES

by David Whyte

Sometimes
if you move carefully
through the forest,
breathing
like the ones
in the old stories,
who could cross
a shimmering bed of leaves
without a sound,
you come to a place

whose only task
is to trouble you
with tiny
but frightening requests,
conceived out of nowhere
but in this place
beginning to lead everywhere.
Requests to stop what
you are doing right now,
and
to stop what you
are becoming
while you do it,
questions
that can make
or unmake
a life,
questions
that have patiently
waited for you,
questions
that have no right
to go away

(pp. 52-53)

This study springs from my personal struggle with one particular pattern, tenderly known as “Too Much and the Ouchi-ness of Racing to a Grinding Halt.” I stumble across the access point to this topic during my “emergent inquiry” into what the research would be about. The emergent inquiry involves a daily practice of authentic movement/dance, responding to chosen playlists while being as present as possible to whatever I notice. I follow the dance with painting and journaling around set prompts. Having clear parameters for the initial inquiry, it doesn’t take very long before my unnoticed embodied feelings push me to automatically and so discreetly raise and keep raising the bar of expectation on myself (behind my own back, as it turns out) little by little, so that I am doing more and more each day.

The drive to achieve is strong and somehow entangled with a story that “more = better”... though I’m not aware of this yet... I’m just following the impulse to do more. Eventually, I am immersed in this practice for around 3 hours daily. It becomes increasingly challenging to sustain alongside my family and full-time work commitments...

It is Day 63 of my initial inquiry toward finding an access point/ curiosity to explore in my doctoral research. My paintings and journaling are impressive; I've generated substantial data and still show no signs of stopping. I'll continue until the year ends and see what the data tells me then. The work day finishes, and I decline to catch up with peers, as "I have to get back for my doctoral emergent inquiry." I'm feeling overwhelmed at the number of essential things I am attending to and jump on my bike to race home... On my way, I swerve to make room for a driver to park ahead as I simultaneously check behind for approaching cars- and there it is... content-in-process as the bike stops dead: my front tyre is stuck in a tram track. In a nanosecond, I'm flying through the air and come to a grinding halt, crashing hard on the busy road. Ouch. Like seriously. The pain is immense and so much more than physical. Kind observers help me to the curb, where I sit, embarrassed, unable to control my weeping. I know this place. I've been here before... ignoring signs to slow down and relentlessly pushing to work harder and do more until it's all out of my control and I have to stop.

So here I am again, in an all too familiar, painful rut: the unsustainable drive/strive to achieve on an exponential activity curve. Enough! I'm so done. No longer able to continue with this vicious cycle that keeps me stuck here on repeat, I am desperate for something to shift. But how? I have lived this way for longer than I can recall. I need to understand more of what is at play here. The entrenched pattern is a signpost worth noticing. It reads, "Hey, slow down, what's happening here? Something matters about this place- there is important work to be done here. Can you stay with this for a moment?" More questions that I've been too busy to notice are on nearby signposts... They ask me if I'd be willing to look a little deeper to get a little clearer about what's yearning to be known in all of this. These frightening requests are barely audible beneath the weeping, but ask me if I would be willing to try to "stop what [I am] doing right now, and to stop what [I am] becoming while [I] do it" (Whyte, 2012, pp. 52-53).

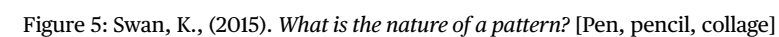
Something is so painfully out of alignment in my ways of being and doing. The dissonant pattern of "Too Much and the Ouchi-ness of Racing to a Grinding Halt" points to an aspect of my life that is out of integrity or not yet integrated. So, I sit with "questions that [may] make or unmake [my] life, questions that have patiently waited for [me], questions that have no right to go away" (Whyte, 2012, pp. 52-53), and wonder about others who share the experience of feeling stuck. I feel an ache in my heart, for them, for me, and a yearning to facilitate research that may cultivate/ activate integrative shifts in my own life and in the lives of others.

I certainly do not write from a position of "expert" but rather as a researcher who is alongside and wholeheartedly committed to learning more about entrenched dissonant patterns in service of the greater good.

This first section is dedicated to understanding more about patterns. It explores *what* my co-inquirers and I think we know about dissonant patterns at the beginning of the research, specifically about the nature and qualities of our experiencing. As the investigation unfolds, the details of a shared landscape become

more evident, and similar elements held within explored patterns begin to emerge. The focus then shifts to *how* understanding of patterns of experiencing grows through emergent, relational, arts-based co-inquiry. This leads me to contemplate how we get stuck in patterns of dissonance and, finally, what keeps us stuck on repeat in these conflicted and unhelpful ways of being and doing.

What is the nature of a pattern in the context of this research?



Opening our eyes to the natural world, we can see patterns everywhere. In this section, I'd like to begin by clarifying what I mean by "pattern" in the context of this research. Investigating the broader nature of a pattern, I look first to the natural world and then briefly consider the nature of patterns in various other fields.

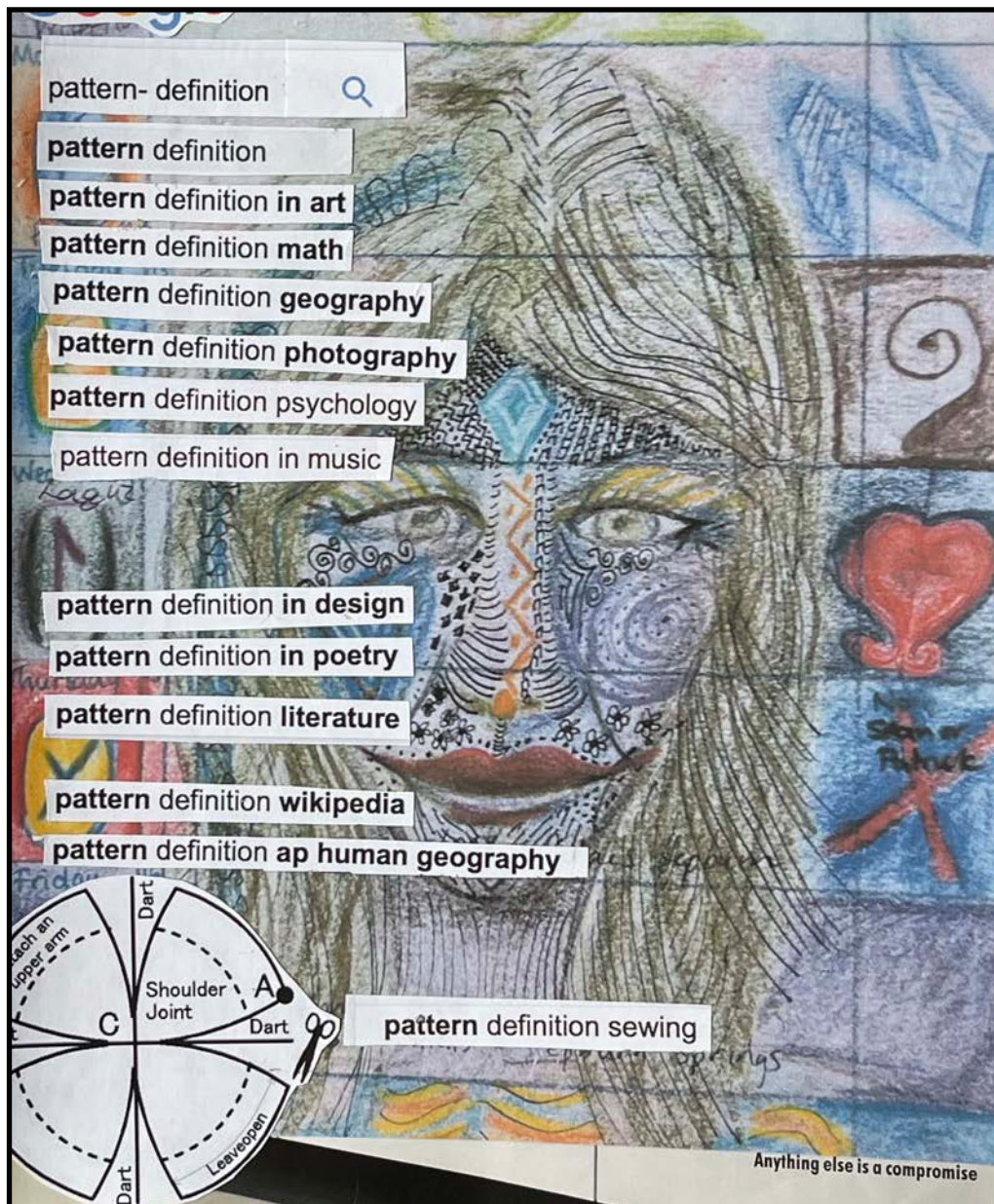
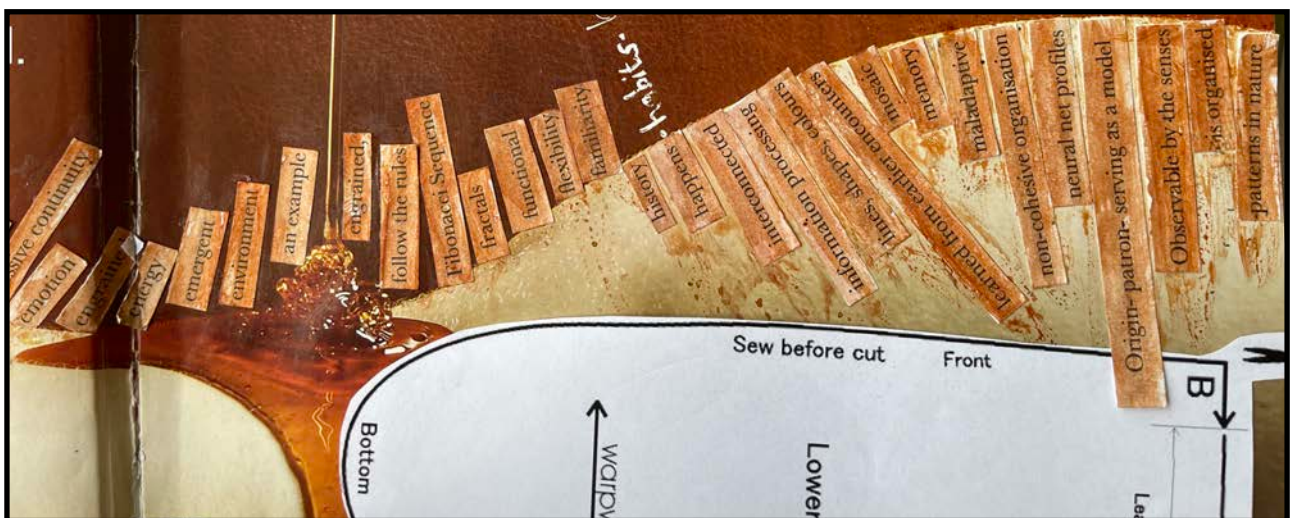
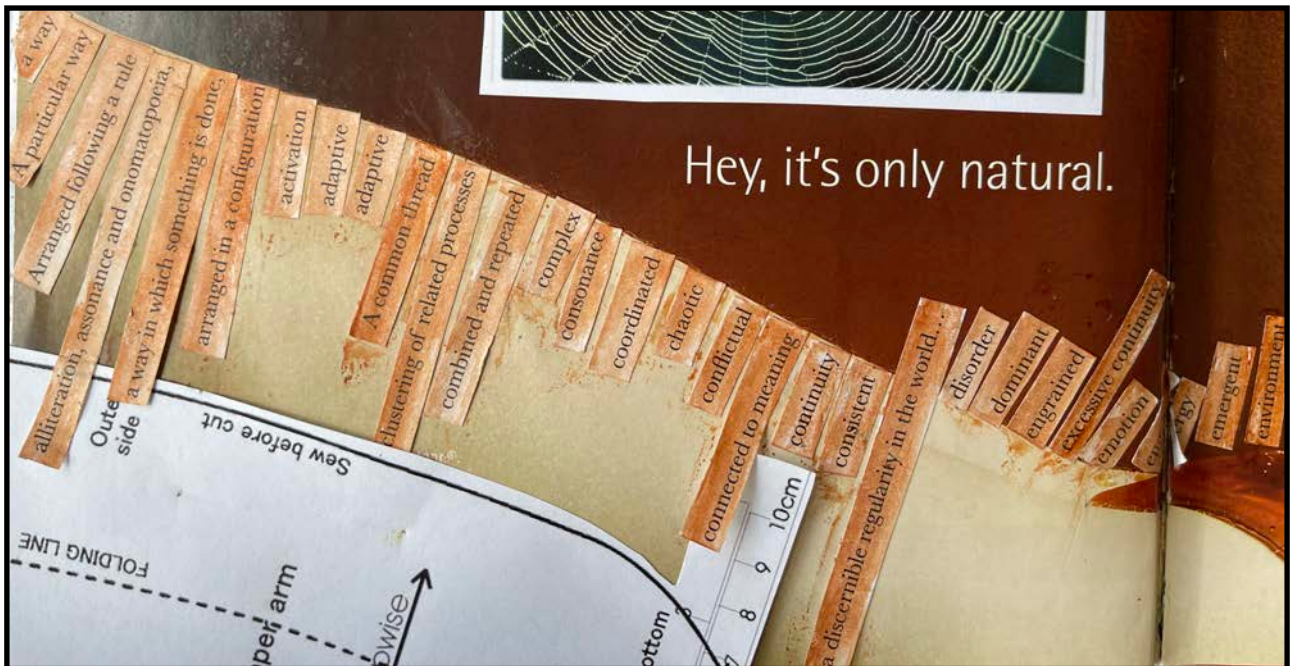


Figure 6: Swan, K., (2015). *Looking for patterns in definitions across contexts*. [Pen, pencil, collage]

I harvest key concepts that resonate, forming them into somewhat of a poetic reduction and acknowledge the intentional repetition in what follows:



Figures 7-8: Swan, K., (2015). *The nature of a 'pattern'*. [White pen, watercolour, collage]



Figure 9: Swan, K., (2015). *The nature of a 'pattern'*. [Collage]

How we see these keywords depends on how we view patterns. In nature, consider the male white-spotted pufferfish, who, come mating season, enacts the astonishing habit of creating an intricate geometric pattern on the seabed in the form of an elaborate mandala (ONE, 2014). This makes him visible enough to attract a mate and links directly to the ongoing survival of his species. Then we see many in the insect and animal kingdoms who have evolved, adorned with complex visual patterns that make them less visible to predators. Reflecting on the human experience of dissonant patterns of living experience, I ponder if and how our repeated enactments and responses connect to a most fundamental drive to survive and if, when and how they may inhibit our ability to thrive.

In the spirit of clarifying what I think I know about the nature of a pattern at the very beginning of this research, I invite you to contemplate Portia Nelson's (Nelson, 2018) "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters":

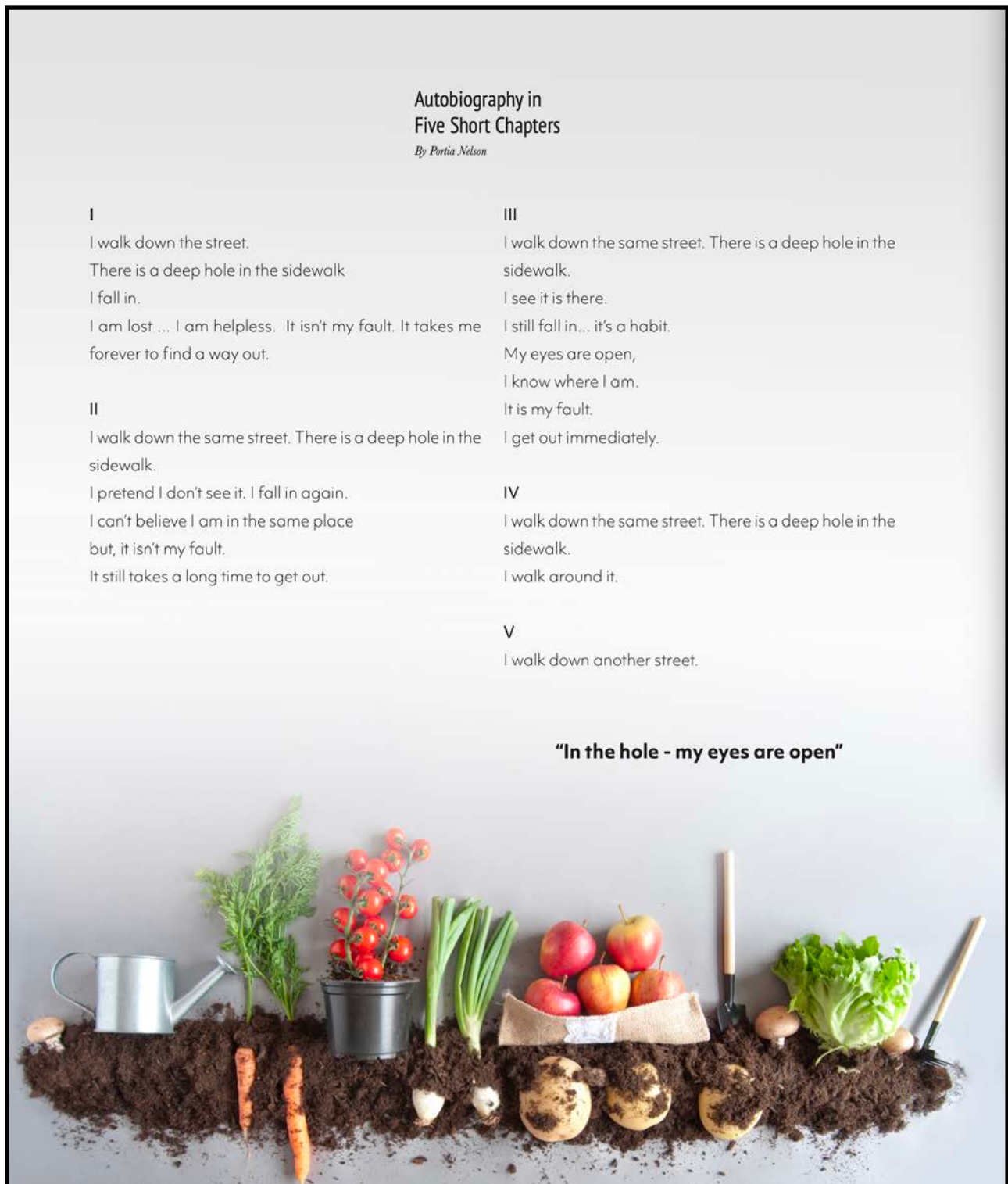


Figure 10: Swan, K., (2018). *Nelson's Autobiography in Five Short Chapters*, in *On Becoming Super: the back story*. [Digital media]

This eloquent expression resonates deeply with my co-inquirers and me and reflects something of our living experience of patterns whilst offering the hopeful sentiment of life beyond entrenchment. Yet, transitioning through Nelson's chapters to *another street* feels more than somewhat elusive at the beginning of the research. Though great in theory, despite what I think I know about patterns of experiencing venturing into this research, I am at a loss as to how to practically re-orient and embody a more harmonious trajectory. The irony is that Nelson's autobiography may be short, but the living experience of Chapters 1 and 2 alone can feel like an eternity.

Experientially, what I *do* know at the outset is that for more than four decades, I have been trapped on autopilot in some areas of my life. I feel stuck as I repeatedly cycle through Nelson's first couple of chapters, at the mercy of several dissonant entrenched patterns of experiencing. In an ongoing wrestle with shame, I attempt to avoid the "hole" (which feels more akin to a chasm in my own autobiography) at all costs - alas, to no avail. During my doctoral emergent inquiry, the crashing "wake-up call" lands me in Chapter III, aware of where I am and how I got here, with eyes open. Though not the first crash in my autobiography, something about the timing and intensity of this one shifts my perspective. Unexpectedly re-oriented, I am no longer bogged in the details of the content of my experiencing. I can suddenly take in the broader scene of what is actually occurring in the unfolding process of making my way in the world. This "profound nudge" (Sousanis, 2015) is a marked point of recalibration - and I am actually able to hear and seriously consider the long-buried, troubling question of, "If not now, when?" (Hillel the Elder), another question that has "no right to go away"...



Figure 11: Swan, K., (2017). *If not now, when?* [Collage]

If. Not. Now. When?

I'd like to focus on Nelson's first two chapters to acknowledge and highlight where Liz, Eliza, Clare, and I start our exploration together.

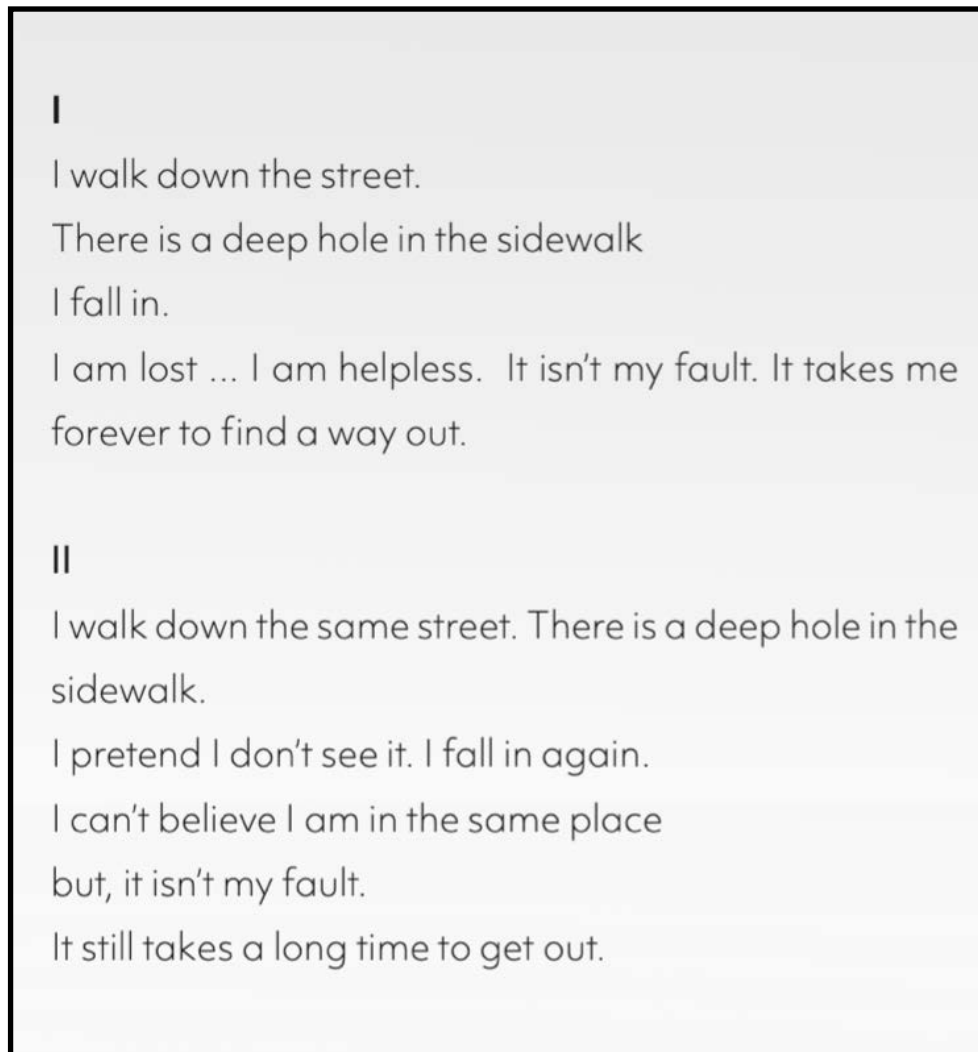


Figure 12: Swan, K., (2018). *Nelson's Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, Chapters I & II*, in *On Becoming Super: the back story*.
[Digital media]

Should Liz, Clare, Eliza and I write our own personal versions of these opening chapters, the scenery might vary. However, what is common to our experience of being stuck in entrenched dissonant patterns (same street, same hole, on repeat), is the way our autobiographies begin. In our experience of Chapter I, we travel down our prospective paths. It's not like we know that a hole exists... and without warning, we are pulled by something best described as an elusive yet powerful magnetic force down into it. With no hint or signal, we're in. Chapter II has us travelling the same course in the same way, yet pretending we are on a different track. Again, the pull comes as a shock, and we're in once more.



Figure 13: Swan, K., (2014). *Look the other way and it doesn't exist*. [Pen, pastel, watercolour on paper]

As we inquire into the painful experience of these early chapters, we discover that it is through ordinary moments of everyday living experiencing that we access and share what feels meaningful. This is where our paths intersect.

Patterns have elements that are helpful to recognise: the structure of a pattern of living experience

My initial conceptual understanding of the structure of a pattern of experiencing is primarily informed by the work of Lett (2011), who designed a process for *mapping* patterns (Figure 14). "Mapping", in this sense, explores core elements held within a pattern, elements that are worthy of attention, through a series of questions that "yield crucial information...[and] are... seen as significant dimensions of experiencing... These considerations lead to a sense of what we think we know, how this might be explored further, and the preferred ways of being in this experiencing" (Lett, 2011, pp. 18-19).

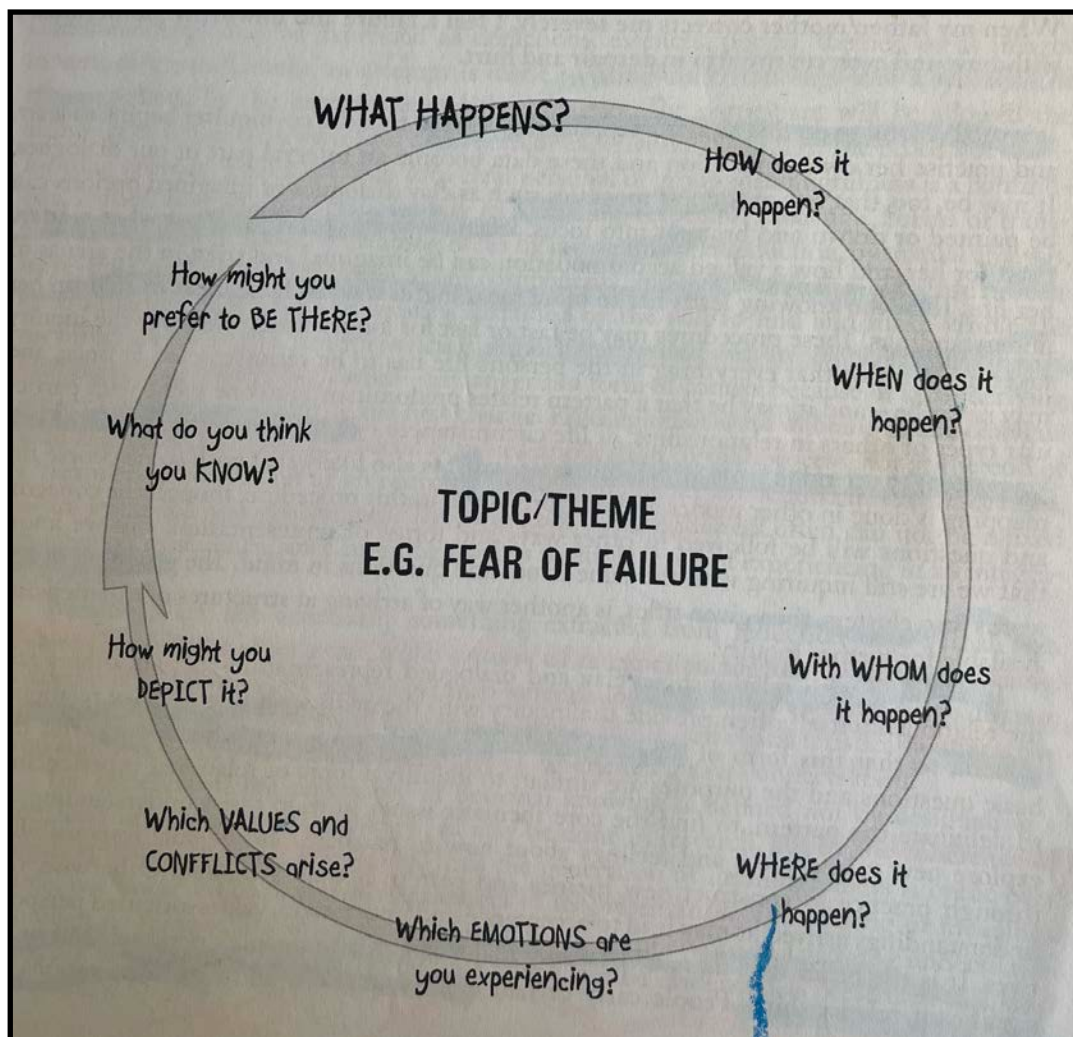


Figure 14: Lett, W., (2011). *Mapping a pattern of experiencing*. [Photograph]

As the study unfolds, my co-inquirers and I find that exploring these elements of a pattern contributes to a growing clarity of what is at play in our experience of entrenched ways of being. Mapping is a way of landing dimensions of experiencing. It considers Context (what, how, when, where, and with whom), Emotional Activation, Values and Conflicts, Depiction, Reflection and Preferred ways of Being.

Still significantly influenced by Lett's (2011) research, as the co-inquiries unfold over time, we move from the original format, with its clear starting point and directional flow (refer to Figure 14), to a more fluid way of identifying what is at play (refer to p.40). As we explore the mapping process, we articulate what Lett (2011) terms "temporary approximations to meanings" (p. 14) as a way of expressing what we think we know for now about the relationship between elements held within our dissonant patterns. These are loosely generated and depicted in the artefacts as a "Thematic Statement" (Lett, 2011, p. 287) where we articulate knowings about identified emotions, bodily feelings and behaviours and express them as they connect. A thematic statement generally follows this structure:

When (something happens)
 I feel (emotion or felt sense)
 then I (behaviour)
 as a result, I (conflict)...

(Lett, 2011)

For example, using this structure, I illustrate my limited/beginning understanding of the pattern that is the impetus for the research.

I try to express what I think I know of the experience by visually expressing something of:

Too Much and the Ouchi-ness of Racing to a Grinding Halt.



Figure 15: Swan, K., (2013). *A strong push to do more.* [Pen, watercolour on paper]

After mapping the experience, I come to this loose knowing:

When I'm engaged with others in a meaningful project,
I initially feel excited and purposeful, but then I notice a jittering in my gut and feel a strong drive to do
more. I fear that what I am doing is not enough/ good enough.

So I begin blindly "raising the bar on myself", setting higher and higher expectations to achieve, and
doing more and more until eventually, the doing becomes unsustainable.

As a result, I typically end up getting accidentally hurt somehow and physically have to stop to recover...
The irony is that as a result, having landed in this "broken" place yet again, I can't keep "doing more"- in
fact, I can't do anything for a while, and shame and disappointment in myself kick in, for landing in this
place again.

My need to belong, to contribute in meaningful ways to the greater good, and to be safe (if I'm not
enough, I won't be of value to others and ultimately might get exiled...and die...so keep working harder/
doing more!!) is in conflict with my needs for health, wellbeing, balance and ease.

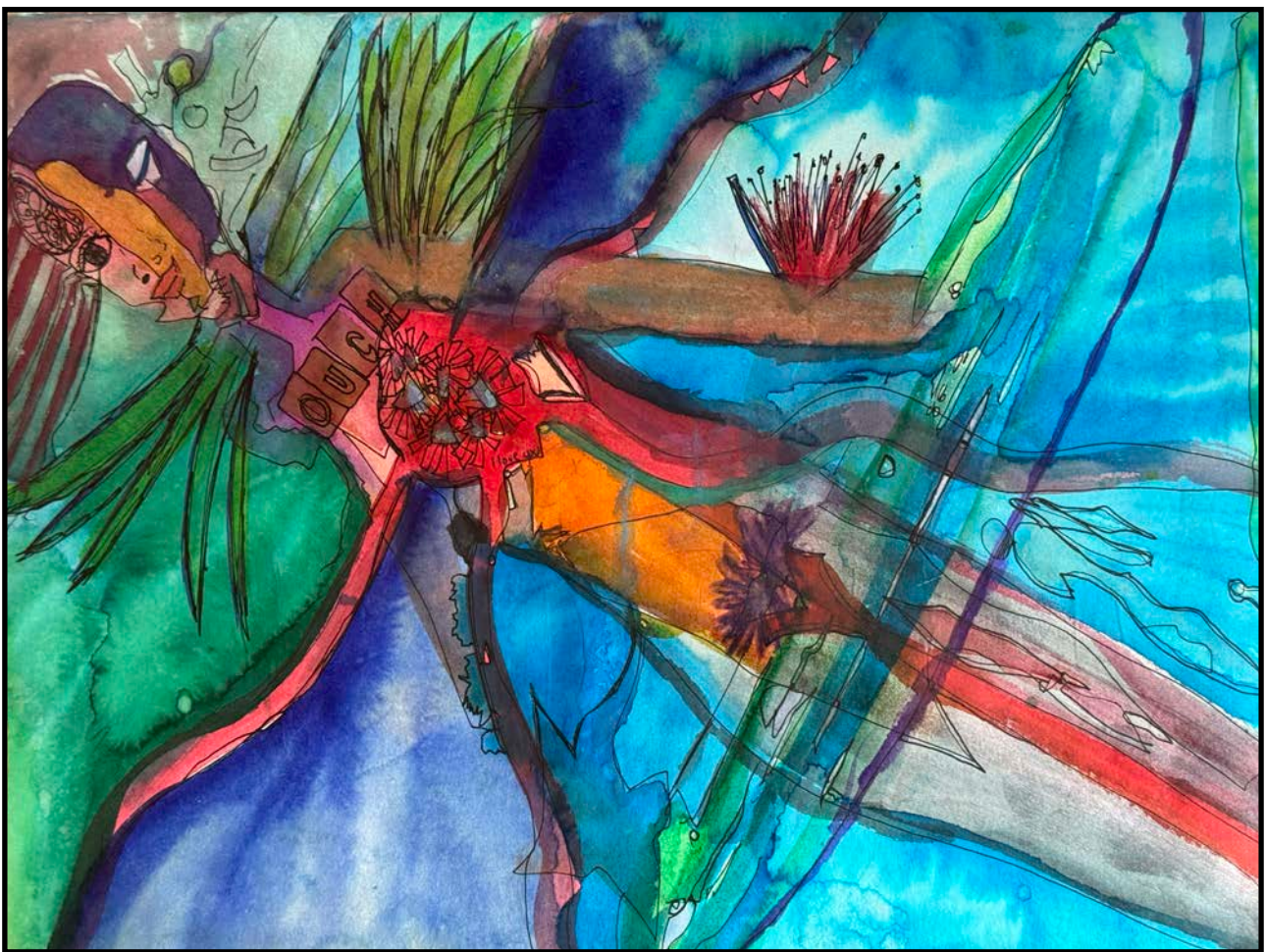


Figure 16: Swan, K., (2014). *Too Much and the Ouchi-ness of Racing to a Grinding Halt*. [Mixed media]

In the context of the research, I come to notice that regardless of whether patterns emerge as *content* for Clare, Eliza or Liz or through the shared *process* of co-inquiry, the territory of exploring entrenched, dissonant patterns of experiencing is familiar. The way we choose to navigate through this territory is via emergent, multimodal co-inquiry– and it is our work to listen out and watch for structural elements of patterns as they become accessible, rather than following any particular order, as implied by the

directional arrow on Lett's map (Figure 14). We may recognise a moment of familiar emotional activation, for example, or a repeated enactment or behaviour in an everyday context or within a specific relationship. When we notice structural elements emerge (those that might be identified through mapping), we slow down, linger a little longer, and may even discover other elements nearby. Navigating over time with Liz, Clare and Eliza, I find that more nuanced aspects of the structure of a pattern emerge, and my initial understanding extends. I learn that these elements of dissonant patterns are, in fact, critical landmarks as we make our way towards more harmonious being and living.

Stuck, is a goldmine of information- everything we need is in the mess

(Hyashi, 2015)

When considering the nature of dissonant patterns in general, the scope is vast, ranging from *nasty habits*, described as "...routine[s] or practice[s] performed regularly; ... automatic response[s] to... specific situation[s]" (Clear, 2018, p. 4; Doidge, 2010, pp. 209; 242 & 243) through to more extreme expressions of obsessive-compulsive tendencies (Doidge, 2010, pp. 168-170; Schwartz & Begley, 2003, 1997/2016, 2012) and/or debilitating addiction. Miller (1991) sees addiction as "a sign, a symptom of distress... a language that tells us about a plight that must be understood" (as cited in Maté, 2010, pp. xviv & xvii; Miller, 1991; Ogden, 2019; van der Kolk, 2014; Wondery, 2014). Clare, Eliza, Liz and I each enter the research with our personal experiences of how dissonant patterns play out in our lives. As we co-inquire into our stuckness, we come to recognise that the soil beneath our feet in this vast territory shares some of the same constituents.

Common to what arises through our exploration is the predictability of our behavioural responses to certain incoming sensory information. Ogden et al. (2006) sheds light on the level of automaticity to our "relatively stable action patterns" (p. xvii). These action patterns are elicited time and time again *from beyond our awareness* as we meet similar input. "Procedural tendencies" (Ogden, 2016) become embedded through repetition, creating behavioural shortcuts that save energy and contribute to establishing habits based on the most appropriate response we have available to us at the time (Doidge, 2010, pp. 209 & 210). They are worthy of our presence and attention if we are to understand more and can come into the light of awareness with practice (Siegel, 2018). Predictable behavioural responses are easy to access when exploring patterns. Again, this extends my understanding of the structure of a pattern enough to adapt Lett's mapping process to include it as a core element (Figure 20). It won't be the last adjustment I make to my understanding of the nature of a pattern.

Standing together before we've journeyed too far into the research terrain, Liz, Eliza, Clare and I look out at the expanse before us; it seems never-ending (and I sense there may be a few hidden holes ahead to be mindful of as we make our way). We identify a shared feeling of 'stuckness', noticing the ruts of repeated undesirable, unhelpful or outmoded ways of being that surface across various contexts of our lives. This stuckness feels problematic to each of us, as though *something is not as it should be*, and the territory is not new. We know the hole once we find ourselves here. We've been here before, and we don't like it. Dissonance is in the air, and these places of stuckness feel significant. My co-inquirers and I find that regardless of our personal contexts, the repetition and reinforcement that lands us in the hole is experienced as a form of rigidity *and*, conversely, has chaotic characteristics (Siegel, 2006). As difficult as it is to not define ourselves by these discordant entrenchments as we continue to meet for the research sessions, we try to remember that when stuck in ruts of repetitive experiencing, we are always in the process of becoming and much more than what/how we imagine ourselves to be (Kaufman, 2020; Maté, 2010).

We come to learn that where we are stuck in our lives reveals itself both through the *content* of the inquiries (the devil is in the details) and the reoccurring *process* (as enacted during the research) (Lett, 2011; Wallin, 2007). With an air of déjà vu, we slow down, attend with sensitivity to what we notice and stay with what is present. We acknowledge content and process as significant sources of information and energy and attune our lenses to view them as equally important.

Navigating the terrain a little further, we can initially acknowledge that *something* keeps us in a repetitive loop (a form of holding pattern) and that when we attempt to pin this *something* down, it feels akin to a slippery fish: at times, partially in, though primarily often out of our awareness. We don't fully understand our inclinations yet are often blindly driven by them (Doidge, 2010; Kashdan, 2010; Levine, 1997, 2010; Ogden, 2019; Schwartz & Gladding, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014).

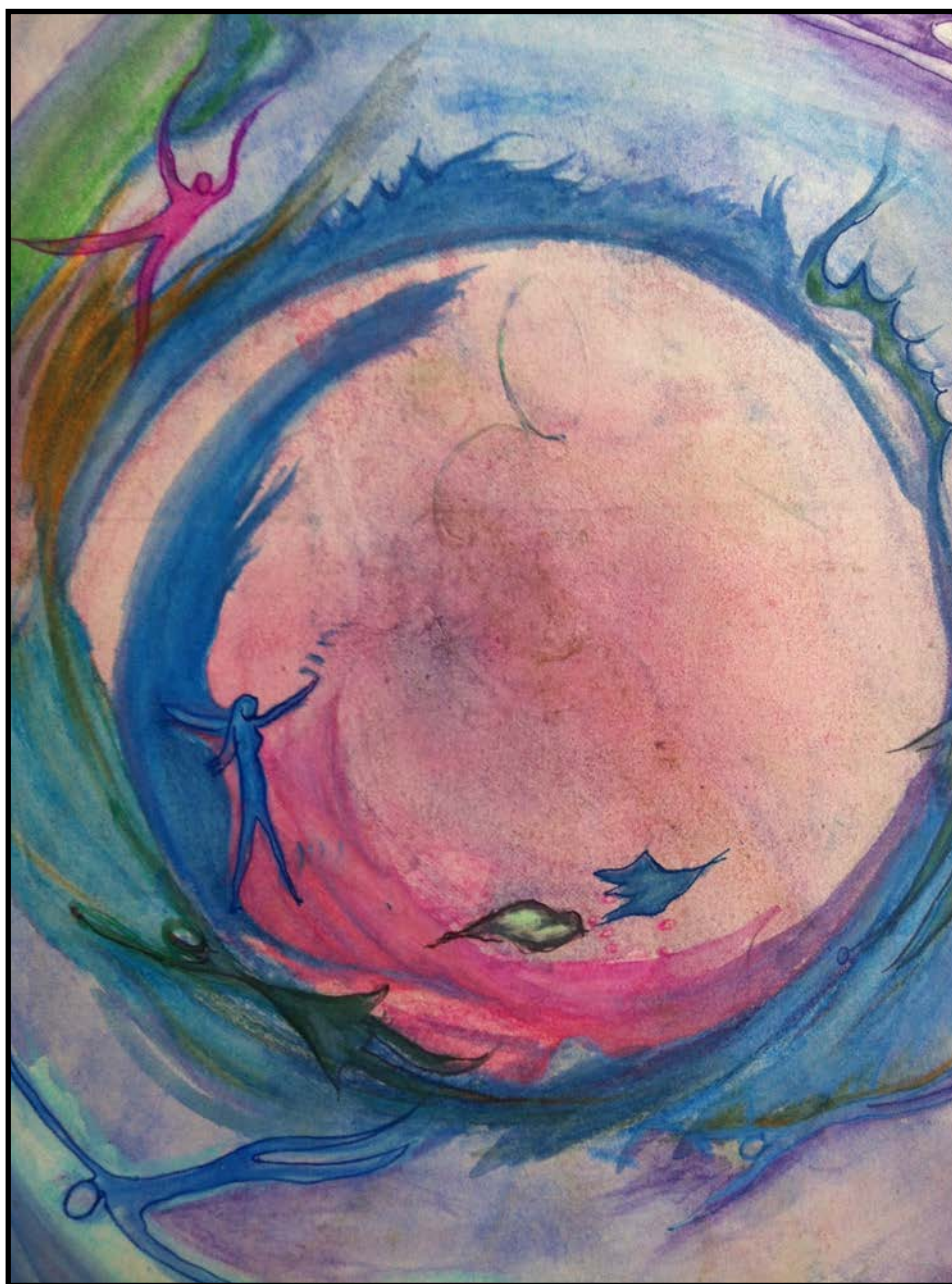


Figure 17: Swan, K., (2012). *In the hole again and again and again and again and again.* [Aquarelle pencil, pen on paper]

There is a strong shared sense of *being at the mercy of* these dissonant patterns as if we have no agency. It is as though this way of being in the world is beyond our control, unshiftable by willpower or the purest of intentions alone. The experience is akin to being set to auto-pilot without consent, comparable to being held hostage by certain aspects of self who have their own vital needs and agendas that conflict with what feels harmonious to the greater sense of us (Feldenkrais, 1990; Fisher, 2017; Kaufman, 2020; Ogden, 2016; Schwartz, 1987; Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020). We experience internal tension and conflict. This speaks to how Maté (2010) distinguishes between passion and addiction: "The central question is: who's in charge, the individual or their behaviour? How it looks externally is irrelevant. The key issue is a person's internal relationship to the passion and its related behaviours" (p. 115). All we know at the outset is that the internal relationship feels fraught.



Figure 18: Swan, K., (2014). *Who's in charge?* [Inktense pastel, watercolour, pen on paper]

This elusive magnetic force (Lewin, 1947) that seemingly comes from nowhere takes us from point A on the path (stimulus) to B (patterned response/ in the hole) in *no time* (Lett, 2011; Maté, 2010; Ogden, 2016, 2019; Siegel, 2012b). It represents the triggers evoked in the present, ordinary moments of experiencing that activate a cascade of immediate reactions that sit outside our awareness in these early chapters of our understanding. When this occurs, time collapses to land us in the hole of being stuck in the unresolved past (Maté, 2010; Porges, 2011; Reisz et al., 2018; Siegel, 2012b).



Figure 19: Swan, K., (2015). *In a nano-second, back in the hole*. [Watercolour, pen on paper]

An adapted/ developed map: core structural elements of a dissonant pattern

I continue to examine and adjust what I think I know of the shared elements within patterns as the research unfolds and, again, build upon Lett's work (2011, p. 3). The following adjusted map reflects the adapted elements that emerge through the co-inquiries, alerting us to what to look out for as we collaborate to make sense of the stuckness. These critical elements are identified, shared, developed and evidenced across the accompanying artefacts (refer to the *Ways of Doing* section, Part 2).



Figure 20: Swan, K., (2021). *The structure of a Dissonant Pattern*. [Digital media]

These critical, structural elements present in no particular order depending on how the content and process unfold, and as we recognise them, we slow down, stay with them, and explore them further. We attune to the elements, listening out for them as they emerge in their own time, order and manner. Hence, I knowingly present the modified version without directional arrows to reflect the value and intention of meeting emergent information in the order it emerges naturally. Our explorations are developed through the descriptions of the core elements of a pattern that follow. These incorporate my adaptations to Lett's original structure.

Stimulus/Trigger

What happens?

When we experience novelty in our environment, an "initial orienting response" is activated without requiring conscious awareness. Our brains and other bodily systems "enter a state of heightened alertness with an internal message of *something important is happening here and now*" (Levine, 1997, p. 93; 2010; Siegel, 1999a, p. 124). According to Fogal et al. (2013), "[t]he ability to respond to threat and to seek safety is the most important job of our nervous system" (p. 147). We are alerted to *pay attention* to "representations of the body and the external world", and it takes a matter of microseconds for us to move into what Siegel (1999a) refers to as "elaborative appraisal and arousal" processes, which are central to the functioning of our brain. The flow of energy is directed through our systems via these processes, serving to "modulate... [and] differentiate unfolding states of mind within [us]" (p. 124).

The relationship between the initial stimulus/trigger and emotional activation is closely interconnected. Arden (2010) links this to "implicit memory", otherwise referred to as "unconscious memory". He posits that implicit memory "reacts to the emotional intensity of events and situations; when the situation is potentially dangerous, it activates the fear system in your body" (p. 15). Buczinski (NICABM, 2021) describes triggers as "seemingly insignificant moments of stimuli that can suddenly flood [us] with strong feelings of anger, fear, anxiety or even sadness" (Emotional Triggers Introduction, 00:01:22).

According to Ogden et al. (2006), "[w]e sustain a preparation to orient at all times... and this preparation is both physical and psychological" (p. 65). They remind us that "[b]oth habituation and sensitisation are necessary if we are to cope with the multitude of available stimuli in each moment and still properly focus our attention and keep our arousal within a window of tolerance" (p. 71). It is when habituation becomes reinforced beyond what the stimuli call for that maladaptive patterns deepen, and we find ourselves stuck. Orienting to a stimulus, we may find ourselves triggered in anticipation of something resembling an unresolved past experience (novelty/threat response). We can observe this in the link between original experiences of trauma and subsequent re-enactments, where we may connect an earlier unresolved experience with our current situation and respond in an attempt to resolve the earlier experience (Levine, 1997, pp. 181-183; 2010).

As we begin to bring more awareness to our experience of being stuck in dissonant patterns, we find that being able to identify the element of Trigger/Stimulus supports us in deepening our understanding of how we end up caught in a loop of *in the hole again*. By becoming clearer about the triggers/stimuli within our patterns, we are more equipped to recognise them when they present in our lives. This awareness resources us to consider what is occurring and begin to see the relationship between elements and, eventually, what might be needed to make steps towards re-directing this conflicted trajectory.

The following core elements of a dissonant pattern support us in further clarifying the context surrounding the stimulus/trigger. They are a way of fleshing out the finer details of the external aspects of the *source of activation*, our responses, and the sense we make of these. This richer sense-making is important because, as Ogden et al. (2006) note, the sources of activation may take place concurrently and can be otherwise difficult to untangle.



Figure 21: Swan, K., (2016). *I'm triggered*. [Watercolour, pen on paper]

Social/Relational Context

With whom does this happen?

Our patterns are evoked in relationships with one another. The relational context through which we become triggered offers us critical information and insight into understanding our patterned and preferred ways of being in the world. Gaete et al. (2018) suggest that "interpersonal patterns are intrinsically related to the concept of relational preferences..." (p. 3). It is helpful to recognise, be present to and describe what arises in real-time as we relate to others. As we enact our patterns, "[w]ho [we] are is not independent of [our] relationships or [our] *embodied brain*, but it emerges from them" (Siegel, 2012b, pp. 2-4).

Relationships, from the stance of interpersonal neurobiology, are the emerging patterns of the exchange of energy and information over time (Siegel, 2012b, pp. 2-2), and *the way* energy is exchanged directly shapes the nature of our relationships. Siegel (2012b) posits that:

...energy and information exchange patterns establish their own habitual ways of existing in the interactions between people- or even with groups of people or non-human entities, such as the living planet Earth...[and] we can find that these patterns continually reinforce themselves in -at times- unhelpful ways.

(pp. 2-3)

Exploring the triggers/stimuli for our patterns by bringing more awareness to the relational context of our entrenched patterns supports us in making connections to other core elements of the pattern. Establishing further connections between previously disconnected elements is critical for integrative shifts to occur (Badenoch, 2008; Siegel, 2012b).

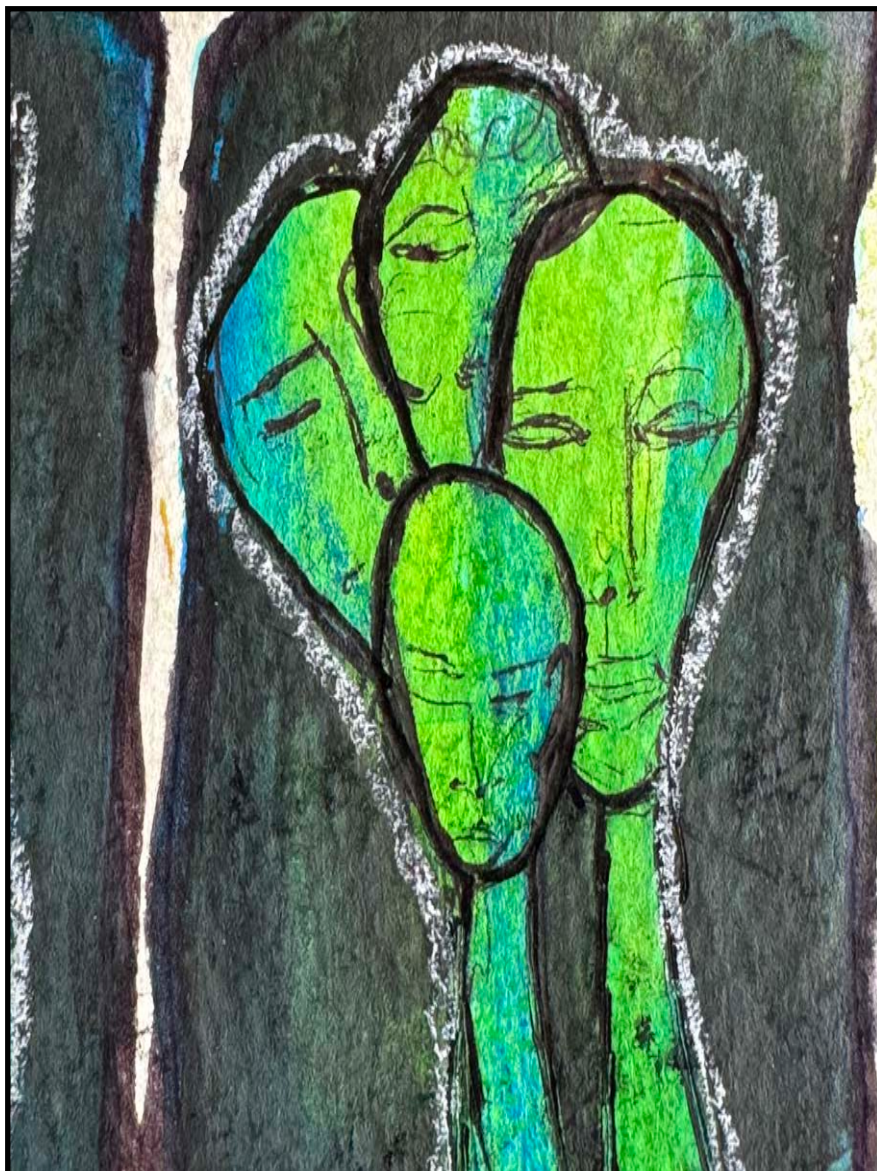


Figure 22: Swan, K., (2017). *With whom does this happen?* [Watercolour, chalk pastel, pen on paper]

Situational Context- Time and Place

When and Where does this happen?

I choose to present both time and place as different facets of the same element here, as they are experienced simultaneously throughout the research. When our external environment evokes anticipation of something often implicitly sensed and beyond awareness, a familiar orienting response (as referred to above) can be activated by the contexts of times and places. Circumstances align to bring forth automatic responses before we realise what is unfolding, based on previous significant experiencing (in different times and locations), and are contextualised by *when and where* this happens. Proximity to certain stimuli in time and place can re-activate familiar orienting responses that reinforce dissonant patterns (Wood, 2019, Ch. 6). Bringing our awareness and focusing our attention on the situational context of our patterns makes us more able to recognise when we are in the territory of potential triggering.



Figure 23: Swan, K., (2020). *When and where does this happen?* [Watercolour, Ink, pastel, pen on paper]

Embodied Sensations

What do I feel through my immediate senses?

In dissonant patterns, the source of sensory-motor activation tends to arise from an old, outmoded/ no longer adaptive response that becomes generalised to other contexts in anticipation of some kind of danger/threat. In the face of a trigger, our senses heighten at once as we appraise the level of safety/danger attached to what is happening in our immediate environment. Sharpening to attune to stimuli, our senses often become acute, preparing us for further assessment and action if necessary (Ogden et al., 2006, p. 78). If we perceive the stimulus as being a potential threat, body systems that "help us respond to danger" (Fogal, 2013), present as "physical changes in response to sensory input" (Ogden et al., 2006, pp. 7 & 78). As energy moves through our systems, we automatically seek to gain more information through sensory-motor processing. Ogden et al. (2006) extend this process, describing "response" as an "action we are *impelled* to take- that is, how we are *physically* inclined to move after receiving any particular stimulus..." They further elucidate that "*physical, bodily* feelings form the substrate of the emotional states that shape the quality of our decision-making efforts and solutions we create to deal with particular dilemmas...These physical feelings in turn, propel the human organism to take certain actions" (p. xviii). During our co-inquiries, the body is a rich resource of energy and information, and bringing awareness and attention to our embodied experiencing is a valuable practice in making sense of dissonant patterns.

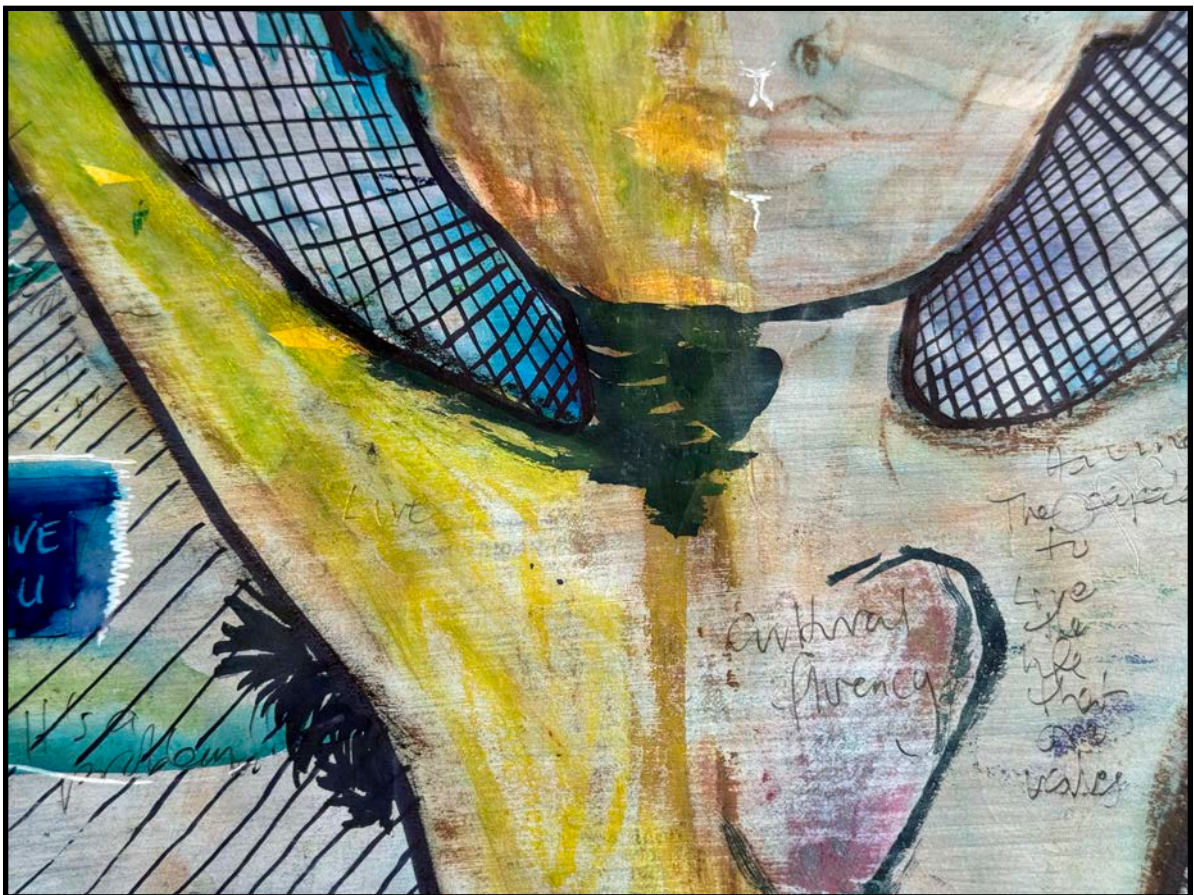


Figure 24: Swan, K., (2015). *What do I feel through my immediate senses?* [Watercolour, Ink, pastel, aquarelle pencil, marker, pen on paper]

Emotional activation

What can I feel as energy urging me to move?

Building upon the Stimulus/Trigger and Embodied Sensing elements, the element of Emotional Activation invites us to consider the familiar emotional responses set in motion as part of our entrenched ways of being.

Darwin (1872) and Pavlov (1927/2010) determined that emotions are designed to elicit bodily action. Bessel van der Kolk adds to this by describing emotion as our experience of a blend of physical sensations and the impulse to act (in Ogden et al., 2006, p. xviii). Siegel (1999a) further clarifies that, in their essence, emotions are the foundation for the mind's meaning-making process (p. 158).

Greenberg and Goldman, (2019) describe the adaptive nature of emotion, availing to us “our basic mode of information processing, rapidly and automatically appraising situations for their relevance to our wellbeing and producing action tendencies to meet our needs” (p. 17). They elaborate further, highlighting that when we encounter specific cues in our surroundings that suggest something novel, comforting, threatening or humiliating, we experience an immediate emotional response. (p. 17). They liken emotions to “a kind of compass, guiding people as to what is important and what needs are being met or not” (p. 17). In assessing incoming stimuli (the trigger) we attempt to determine its emotional significance, as we strive to make sense, “based largely on prior experience, which determines our disposition to approach or avoid whatever we encounter” (Harris, 2019; Ogden et al., 2006, p. xviii).

As with physiological sensations, the emotions evoked in response to triggers are key somatic markers, motivating us to take specific actions like defending ourselves, fighting, withdrawing from someone, or seeking closeness and care. In essence, emotions function as guides for how we react to situations (Ogden et al., 2006, p. xix). In the search to better understand unhelpful patterns, attuning and attending to our emotions as they arise directly connects us to our habituated behavioural responses.



Figures 25-27: Swan, K., (2017; 2015; 2015). *What can I feel as energy urging me to move?* [Watercolour, Inktense pastel, aquarelle pencil, marker, pen on paper]

Action. Behavioural Response. Procedural tendency

How do I respond? What do I do? What are my embodied enactments? What is the movement towards/away from the stimulus? What is my attitude towards parts/others?

This core element is intricately entangled with Emotional Activation, and it is common for them to be experienced concurrently. Ogden et al (2006) points out that "the body, for a host of reasons, has been left out of the *talking cure*" (p. xxvii). When working to better understand engrained patterns, our repetitive enactments or habituated procedural tendencies often provide rich information about our motivation to move towards or away from the incoming stimulus. Procedural tendencies are responses to incoming stimuli from the environment that motivate us to move towards or away from the trigger (Porges, 2011; Tversky, 2019). Identifying what we do (or don't do) as unhelpful patterns play out supports us to become aware of our "automated behaviours when [we] are stirred by intense emotion" (van der Kolk, as cited in Ogden et al., 2006, p. xix).

We process incoming perceptions, assess the new information and interpret it as we compare it with prior experience. In so doing, we try our best to predict the outcome of various possible actions and organise a response to the incoming stimulus. Much of the current literature on patterns focuses on this element. This is likely because our behaviour is externalised and often easier to observe than the internal elements of a pattern, like emotions.

I have deliberately included *What is my attitude towards parts/others?* as a prompt to consider alongside the behavioural response in my adapted version of the map. The research has helped me see how our actions/procedural tendencies in our dissonant patterns illuminate where there is internal conflict present. In my pattern of *Too Much and the Ouchi-ness of Racing to a Grinding Halt*, as I feel afraid that what I am doing is not enough/ good enough, my external behavioural response is to do more and more until I get to breaking point... Simultaneous internal action in response to the fear is a pushdown or silencing of the part of me who needs to be healthy and well and yearns for balance and ease in life. This satisfies the part of me who needs to make everything that's good difficult in a desperate attempt to somehow prove that it's more valuable (therefore, I'm valuable) and thus worthy of keeping around. Noticing what internal actions are present (regardless of how irrational they may seem) supports us in further clarifying the significant nuances concerning the particular pattern of inquiry.

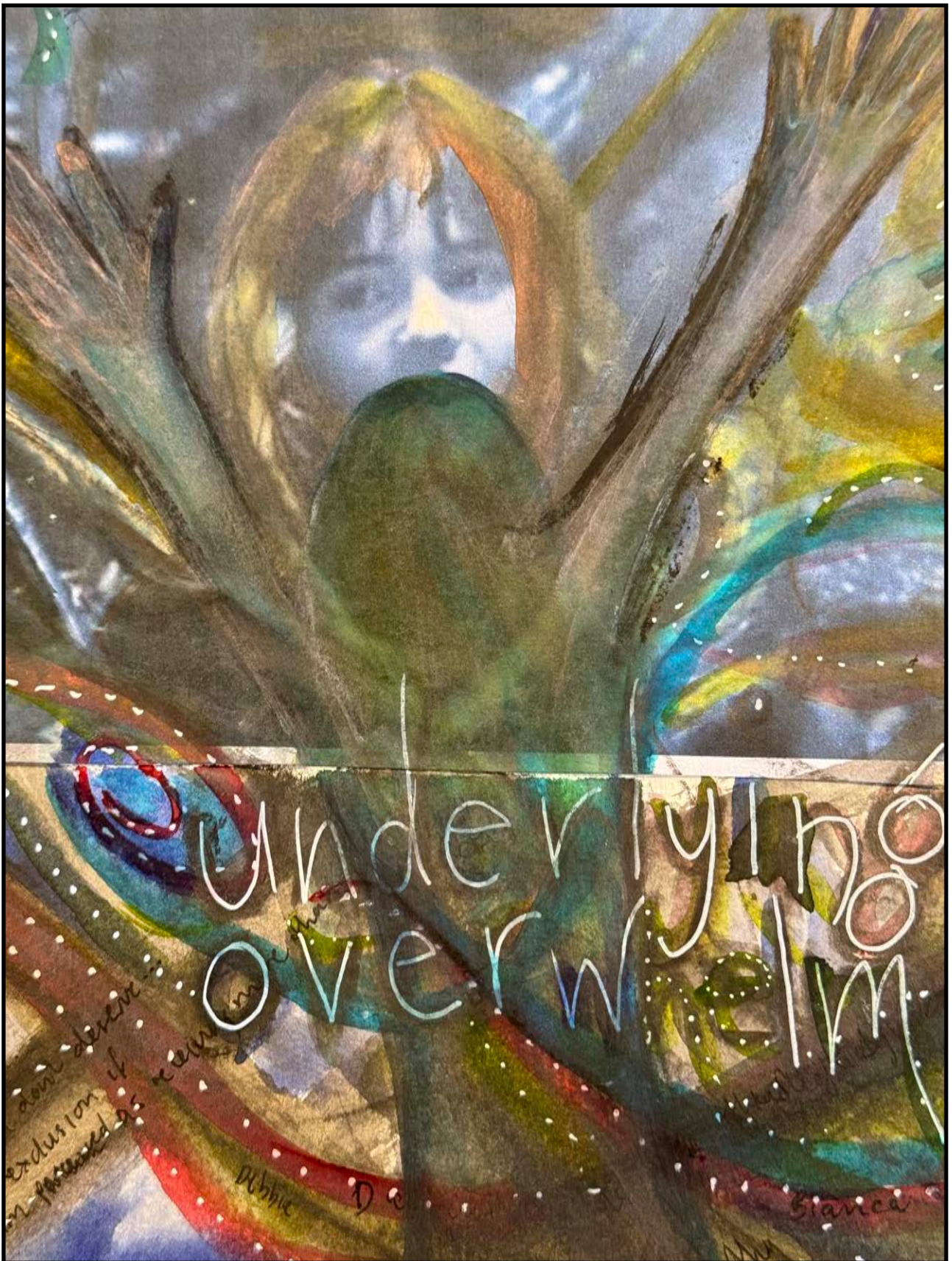


Figure 28: Swan, K., (2020). *Quick-shut her down!* [Mixed media]

Unmet/Unexpressed Needs - could be “The Wound”

What needs are under threat of not being met? What is driving my behaviour? What is trying to be expressed?

As the previous example illustrates, our brain/body is inherently adaptive and prioritises survival demands over other drives (Fisher, 2017; Schore, 2001; Steele & Nijenhuis, 2005). When our basic security needs are deficient or under threat of not being met (Maslow, 1968), they activate emotions to become powerful motivators for action. This lack of satisfaction, be it activated through triggers such as shortages in food, inadequate levels of safety, insufficient access to affection, an absence of belonging, or low self-esteem, becomes a dominant lens that impacts the way we view and experience our reality (Kaufman, 2020, p. xxx).

Kaufman (2020) proposes that our unmet needs will drive us to find ways to defend ourselves to feel a sense of safety and security. When our need for safety is severely thwarted, quite particular reactions are evoked in an attempt to restore a sense of stability or homeostasis (Kaufman, 2020, p. 11). In the face of a perceived threat to our needs for meaningful connection with others, belonging and intimacy, the social pain experienced is indistinguishable from physical pain (Cacioppo, 2014, pp. 7-10; Kaufman, 2020). It is dangerous for social animals to "be on the edge of the social perimeter" (Cacioppo, 2014), which can trigger a series of self-preservation responses, including social evasion. Kaufmann (2020) notes that "in times of perceived instability and danger in the environment...the social protection system is most likely to become activated and exert its effects" (p. 39). For example, when we perceive the imminent threat of rejection, "we feel pain, and the system goes into hyper-vigilant mode to help protect us" (Kaufman, 2020, p. 67) (refer to Liz's artefact). Needs under threat of not being satisfied are a significant driver/motivator within entrenched patterns. We are offered an opportunity to further explore the *magnetic pull towards the hole* when we can identify these needs.



Figure 29: Swan, K., (2018). *The Wound*. [Pastel and pen on paper]

Organising States of Mind, “Parts”, States of Being

Who in me needs understanding/empathy right now? Which parts of me are trying to have their needs met through this pattern?

Schwartz (2020) describes the nature of the mind as inherently multiplicitous (p. 39), giving rise to what the Internal Family Systems (herein IFS) model and the work of Fisher (2017) refers to as *parts*, and Siegel (1999a) refers to as *states of mind*. Siegel declares that “[a] state of mind can be proposed to be a pattern of activation of recruited systems within the brain responsible for (1) perceptual bias, (2) emotional tone and regulation, (3) memory processes, (4) mental models, and (5) behavioural response patterns” (p. 211). As these recruited systems are repeatedly activated, they self-organise in complex clusters to function as a system that becomes engrained over time (Siegel, 1999a, p. 7), shaping our perceptions of the world and instinctive behavioural tendencies in specific environments (pp. 211-212).

When inquiring into the experience of unhelpful/ outmoded patterns, it is most valuable to know these evoked parts/ states of mind, as they often lead us to the internal tension or conflict that wants to be better known (Fisher, 2017; Maté, 2010; Schwartz, 1987; Schwartz, 2020). In all three co-inquiries, parts associated with the pattern emerge in their own ways and become central to meaningful exploration of what feels out of integrity or misaligned with our preferred ways of being. Exploring these well-established states of mind to learn more about them proves to be most integrative (refer to the *Ways of Doing* section, Part 2).



Figures 30-31: Swan, K., (2021). *Who is trying to have their needs met right now?* [Pastel, watercolour and pen on paper]

Beliefs, Reinforced/Associated Narrative

What story do I tell myself about what this means? How do I make sense of this experience?

Have I internalised someone else's voice here? If so, whose voice(s) have I internalised?

Listening for emerging stories or beliefs that are part of entrenched patterns sheds light on how we frame our experiencing to give it meaning (Sousanis, 2015). Habitual narrative tendencies as part of dissonant patterns tend to hold embedded judgments: judgments about ourselves, others, and/or the world- (e.g. *The world is not safe; Men cannot be trusted*- Liz's artefact, *When I reach out to you, you misunderstand me; I need to hide what's underneath*- Eliza's artefact; *I am the only means by which things will get done competently. Therefore I have to do it all* - Clare's artefact, or *I must be valuable/ be everything to everyone, or I will die and more = better*- as some of my entrenched narratives). We know that imagining or thinking about something can stimulate the same brain areas that are activated when we are engaged in the actual experience (Doidge, 2016, 2018). The stories we tell ourselves in response to the elements of our patterns can become engrained and impact the body, whether occurring in actuality or in our imaginations (Doidge, 2018). Brown's research (2015) illustrates the power of acknowledging and being present to the stories we tell ourselves as a supportive practice towards connection and harmony.

Although it didn't emerge in every co-inquiry, considering whether a dissonant pattern is connected to the voice of another is helpful if/when it arises. Throughout the study, Liz sometimes relates her patterns to the reinforced worldview of her mother (see artefact). I have come to hear my migrant father's voice in the conviction that *more = better*, and I can clearly recall the mantra that *we (our family) have to work twice as hard to achieve half as much*, which was drummed into me throughout my schooling years. I feel tears well as I realise that I have unconsciously taken up this baton and carried it with me through much of the doctorate..., and my dad still carries this for his own reasons that, no doubt, made sense at the time of taking this belief in and on. It's such a heavy load.

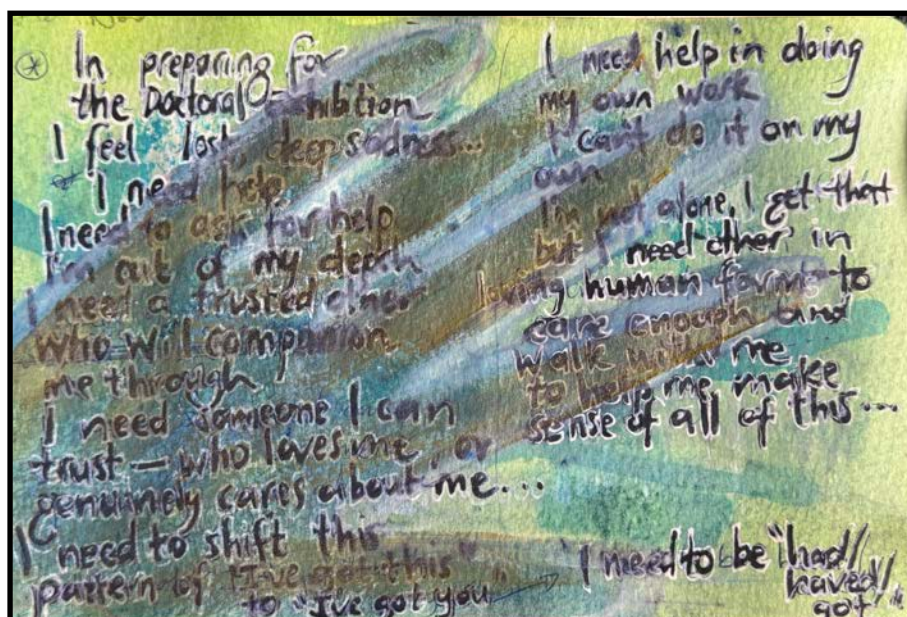


Figure 32: Swan, K., (2017). *I can't do it on my own...* [Pastel, watercolour and pen on paper]

Future-Oriented Beliefs/Anticipations

How do I anticipate my future to unfold based on this? How do I expect the world to treat me based on this?

Once in the efficient swing of streamlining our responses to stimuli, we can develop an implicit hypothesis- a way of orienting towards a predictable future based on the past. As we repeat the associated narrative, our expectations of how things will likely unfold become less flexible/ more rigid (Badenoch, 2008; Dispenza, 2012; Siegel, 2012b). Ogden et al. (2006) highlight that "[m]uch of what we see is coloured and organised by what we expect to see" (p. 75). Throughout the co-inquiries, it becomes evident that anticipated futures shape us in our patterns- (e.g. *If I open my heart and let you in, you will hurt me/I'll be unsafe* - Liz's artefact; *If I authentically express the truth of what is underneath the surface, it will destroy everything*- Eliza's artefact; *To maintain my competence and to be known as good, I must continue to serve others through overdoing- and keep running to ensure they get what they need* - Clare's artefact; and, *If I don't show others how worthy I am, they will discover that I'm not...*-my expectation/ future anticipation).

Slowing down and lingering a little longer when these voices present, gives us access and insight into the worlds we are invested in re-creating. This awareness is critical as we explore ways to disrupt entrenched ways of being to move towards something that feels more integrated.

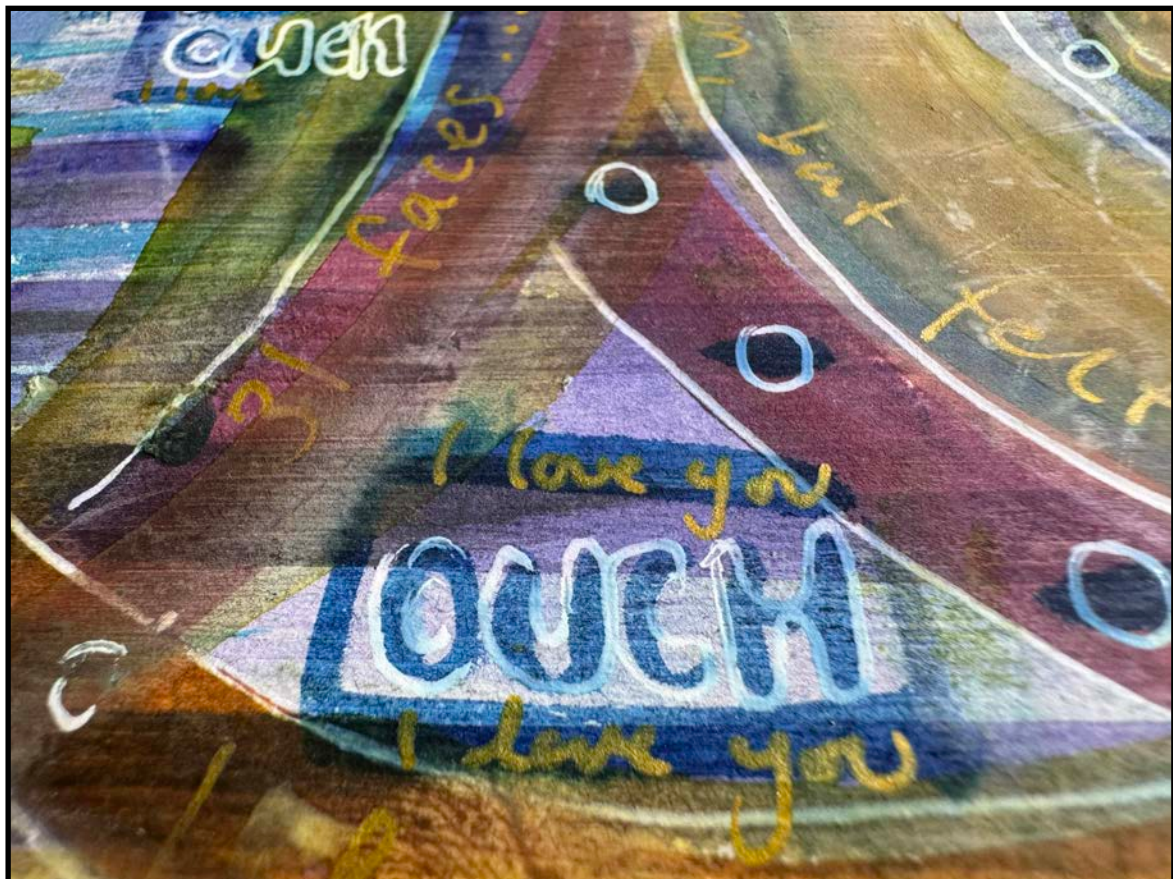


Figure 33: Swan, K., (2015). *Anticipation: Love and pain go together...* [Watercolour and pen on paper]

Preferred Way of Being

How would I prefer to be here? What's the ideal I wish for myself/others when this happens?

Tuning into *the dream* (Rosenberg, 2015), we allow ourselves to imagine beyond the fixed trajectory of our entrenched ways of being. We connect with what matters (Lett, 2011) and what we yearn for that exists beyond what we have known. Listening for preferred ways of being supports us in clarifying values and needs within the pattern. It illuminates potential conflicts where a need or value is compromised in order for another need or value to be met/expressed.

During the study, the art of prospection unexpectedly supports us to access our preferred ways of being. This is where we dream into letting ourselves be contacted by our future selves and we listen to what they want for us. For Liz, a new hand is drawn that brings new possibilities, and the wild, windblown woman sings a new story into being; for Eliza, Super-Eliza embodies Eliza's best-possible self; for Clare, her puppet unties herself from the puppeteer (also Clare), and she falls slowly back towards inner harmony. I feel the deep love and care that my future self holds for me as she reassures me that it's okay; I can trust. The art of prospection emerges naturally and uniquely in each co-inquiry (refer to artefacts) and through the process of bringing this research together.



Figure 34: Swan, K., (2016). *Living in harmony...* [Watercolour and marker on paper]

Values

What really matters to me underneath all of this that is embedded in my preferred way of being?

Values naturally follow from becoming clearer about our preferred ways of being in relation to dissonant patterns of being in the world. Our values are typically embedded in our preferred ways of being. They describe how we wish to be and act with others and in the world (Harris, 2009) and are closely related to needs (Rosenberg, 2015). As we try to make sense of our lived experience of dissonant patterns, Liz, Clare, Eliza, and I keep listening for what matters. When we consider what is at the heart of how we wish to be in the world, values come through as guiding qualities to treat with reverence (Harris, 2009; Lett, 2011).



Figure 35: Swan, K., (2016). *What matters at the heart of everything?* [Watercolour, pen, pastel and marker on paper]

Conflict

Where's the irony in all of this? What's not working about what I need/value and how I respond? What is not being achieved that is seeking resolution?

This core element of a dissonant pattern is where the crux of the dilemma lies. Where needs/values compete for expression, there is compromise, which leads to internal conflict. This is why entrenched patterns feel so dissonant- as though something is out of integrity- because it is. When needs or values are overridden repeatedly, all is not well with us. The core structural elements of a pattern depicted in the adjusted map support us in getting more transparent about the conflict that exists, which invites a more compassionate relationship with the parts/states of mind who vie for attention and understanding as the pattern unfolds (Benazzo, 2021; Lett, 2011; Maté, 2010).



Figure 36: Swan, K., (2016). *Pick me! Pick me!!!* [Watercolour, pen, pastel and marker on paper]

Resolving Action/ Integration

What embodied enactment will support resolution?

What does 'the art'/ multimodal expression need to feel better?

Recognising the vibrantly complex and interconnected structural elements held within our dissonant pattern(s) and the conflict at the heart of it all, we are placed to feel for something that supports resolution. As we map the elements of a dissonant pattern, we invite creative expression to convey in different ways, some of these structural elements. As we engage in and with multimodal forming, the expression is a source for inquiry toward integration: it can communicate what needs and/or values conflict may be present within the entrenched pattern in a way that speaks more than words alone. We then have the opportunity to ask the art what *it* needs to feel better, which is often illuminating. The integrative impact of embodying an enactment that moves us toward a more harmonious state (Ogden, 2019) will be explored further in the Ways of Doing section.



Figures 37-39: Swan, K., (2017; 2016; 2017). *What does the body/art need to feel better?* [Mixed media]

What I come to know through the research that contributes to the development of Lett's (2011) mapping procedure, emerges through co-inquiry. I choose to place these collaborative developments here in Part 1 of the exegesis, as they are part of the research's initial exploratory phase and support me in further clarifying the nature of a pattern. In addition to this, while the map is new, the underlying qualities of what constitutes a pattern are recognised by various authors, as evidenced by some I refer to within the above descriptions of core structural elements of a dissonant pattern.

Having explored the nature of a dissonant pattern in the context of this research, including shared qualities and core structural elements, I now consider and describe *how* we get stuck in such patterns.

Section 1.3

How do we get stuck in the rut of dissonant patterns?

Choosing to continue with Pascual-Leone and Nelson's metaphors of terrain when thinking about entrenched patterns, I'd like to revisit Nelson's first two chapters. Curious, I want to know more about the unmarked region between finding a way out of the hole for the first time and finding ourselves walking down the same street again.

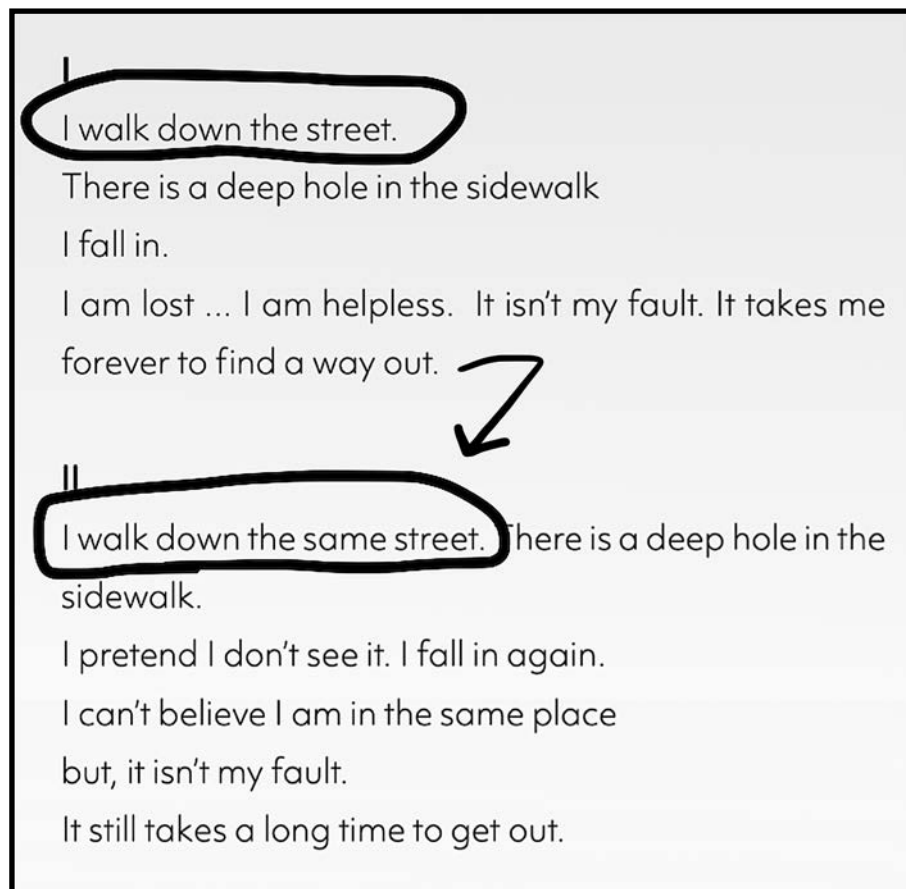


Figure 40: Swan, K., (2018). *Adaptations to Nelson's Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, Chapters I & II.*
[Digital media]

This section recognises critical factors in *getting* stuck in response to arising content. The research is intentionally designed to greet emergent material without employing specific frameworks to make sense of the data. Yet, what emerges through the study acknowledges the significance of factors such as trauma, adverse childhood experiences and patterns of attachment in relation to the experience of being stuck in dissonant patterns.

The question of *how* we get stuck warrants consideration and supports us in determining what keeps us stuck.

Considering the brain and how we get stuck

This section begins by considering the brain's role in relation to patterns. Being a pattern-generating organ (Doidge, 2016) primarily of and for movement, our brains make our bodies move by activating the muscles. According to Sperry (1952), everything else the brain does is secondary to this (Feldenkrais, 1990; McGilchrist, 2019; Ogden et al., 2006, p. xviii; Sperry, 1952, p. 298; Tversky, 2019). Van der Kolk (as cited in Ogden et al., 2006) argues that "[f]undamentally, life is about making our way in the world, and how we do that depends on the hard-wiring of our brains. This hard-wiring is derived from the evolutionary legacy that we more or less share with all living creatures, combined with the imprints of our own personal early experiences" (p. xvii).

Described as "plastic", the brain is akin to soft clay or plasticine- it constantly adjusts itself in response to every experience and relational exchange, efficiently moving us towards or away from varying stimuli. The brain creates shortcuts that become established through repetition over time (along with a little help from our genes). We become proficient, as Doidge (2010) describes, "able to make our way through the world maintaining a sense of self and the ability to develop, respond and grow while being protected from unceasing change" (pp. 208-209). Establishing patterned ways of being is vital to our survival, sparing us from having to repeatedly relearn everything we do, as though for the first time. Sousanis (2015) notes that "[w]hat is at first a struggle quickly becomes second nature" (pp. 110-111). However, Dewey (2012) cautions that "the very 'plasticity' that makes this possible is jeopardised as our habits come to possess us, obstructing our flexibility" (Dewey, 2012; as cited in Sousanis, 2015, pp. 110-111).

The benefits of neuroplasticity are numerous, and advances in neuroscience contribute to improved quality of life for many people every day (Doidge, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018; Eagleman, 2016). Ironically, the flexibility and adaptability of the brain are also directly linked to the experience of becoming stuck in dissonant patterns (Doidge, 2010; Pascual-Leone & Hamilton, 2001). Doidge (2010) raises a critical question when scrutinising how we find ourselves in unhelpful ruts of experiencing: "If our brains are so plastic and changeable, why do we so often get stuck in rigid repetition?" (p. 242). He refers to this phenomenon as *The Plastic Paradox*, where "the same neuroplastic properties that allow us to change our brains and produce more flexible behaviour can also allow us to produce more rigid ones" (p. 242). Plasticity is always present. *Positive plasticity* moves us toward healing, whereas *Negative plasticity* keeps us held in addictions and neuroses and inhibits our development. Unaware, we repeat experiencing over and over again, and circuitry gets reinforced (Doidge, 2010, 2016; Pascual-Leone & Hamilton, 2001).

Pascual-Leone (2001) - (conveniently in keeping with Nelson's terrain metaphor) offers a helpful analogy to describe the essence of how this works, likening the plastic brain to a "snowy hill in Winter" (pp. 427-455). Certain features of the hill are a given: "the slope, the rocks, the consistency of the snow [which] are like our genes" (Doidge, 2010, p. 209). Standing atop the freshly covered hill, many possible ways exist to get to the bottom. Doidge (2010) elaborates: "When we slide down on a sled, we can steer it, and it will end up at

the bottom of the hill by following a path determined both by how we steer and the characteristics of the hill" (p. 209; Pascual-Leone & Hamilton, 2001) - (I liken this to Nelson's first chapter: we experience life, something happens). The metaphor is further clarified by noting that too many factors come into play to predict exactly where we will land.

Here's the curious thing: Pascual-Leone continues by proposing that:

what will definitely happen the second time [we] take the slope down is that [we] will more likely than not find [ourselves] somewhere or another that is related to the path [we] took the first time. It won't be exactly that path, but it will be closer to that one than any other. And, if [we] spend [our] entire afternoon sledding down, walking up, sledding down, at the end [we] will have some paths that have been used a lot, some that have been used very little...and there will be tracks that [we] have created, and it is very difficult now to get out of those tracks [as they've become really speedy and efficient pathways to the bottom of the hill]. And those tracks are not genetically determined anymore. [So] to take a different path becomes increasingly difficult.

(as cited in Doidge, 2010, p. 209)

Sousanis (2015) captures the conundrum we find ourselves in, as we are "confined, boxed into bubbles of our own making" (p. 14). Aspects of our lives flatten, and we become "trapped within the borders of [our] vision" (p. 24).

And so, we find ourselves "walking down the same street."



Figures 41-43: Swan, K., (2017; 2017; 2018). *The brain and how we get stuck*. [Mixed media]

Considering environment and early relationships and how we get stuck

Building on our understanding of how the brain influences us to develop entrenched ruts in our ways of being, I'd like to briefly consider how our environment and relationships contribute to getting stuck in dissonant patterns. Tottenham's (2014) findings suggest that "if the environment is enriched and favourable, neurobiology will optimise for growth and development. If the environment is harsh, then neurobiology will optimise for thrift and adversity" (p. 2). Within the confines of our study, we don't intend or orient ourselves to explore or examine dissonant patterns through the lens of particular environmental and early relationship theories such as Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 2012; Salter Ainsworth et al., 2015). We approach our bid-to-understand via a methodology underpinned by values, including experiencing as a primary way of knowing, emergence, relationality, and multimodality. We also hold a phenomenological attitude, describing and exploring our living experiences. Despite these parameters, the wealth of historical, theoretical and cutting-edge research on the significance of the environment and the quality of early relationships is crucial as we contemplate how we become stuck in the ruts of dissonant patterns (Alsop et al., 2020; Baylin & Hughes, 2016; Farber & Siegel, 2011; Hughes et al, 2016; Reisz et al., 2018; Siegel & McIntosh, 2011; Siegel, 2010a, 2012b, 2017; Wallin, 2007).

In more recent work, Baylin & Hughes (2016) report that "[e]arly exposure to poor care tunes the child's brain for living defensively," (p. 1) (Cushing & Kramer, 2005; Roth et al., 2006; Rutherford & Johnston, 2001; Tottenham, 2012), leading to what he and Hughes (2016) term as "blocked trust" (p. 2). This happens when we suppress inherent relational needs of comfort and companionship to survive neglect and abuse (Benazzo, 2021; Narvaez, 2018; Tottenham, 2012).



Figure 44: Eliza Jane, (2014). *Warning! Warning! Danger! Danger!* [Pencil, aquarelle, oil pastel, watercolour, marker]

Our social engagement systems (Porges, 2011, Borges & Dana, 2018) are affected by these early experiences. They are likely to become sensitised to chronic defensiveness if there is any need to protect ourselves from pain (Baylin & Hughes, 2016, pp. 1-6). Defensiveness is an adaptive response to adverse experiences, but it can quickly become maladaptive if repeatedly applied to contexts and with people who are *not* threatening or unsafe. Perceiving danger as an automatic expectation/ anticipation orients us to strongly reinforce and follow pathways that will get us to the bottom of Pascal-Leone's metaphoric hill as quickly and in as close to one piece as possible, by whatever means we have available to us. The more we reinforce our anticipations of how the world is based on out-of-date experience, the more we find ourselves walking down Nelson's same street- headed for the same hole, unable to believe that our environment and the people in it could be different from those of earlier experience.

Considering the complication of trauma and how we get stuck

Once more, I feel it necessary to note that although we aren't explicitly looking through trauma-informed lenses as the co-inquiries unfold, considering how we get stuck in dissonant patterns of experiencing inadvertently takes us into this terrain.

Originating from the late 17th century, *trauma* is a Greek word meaning "wound". Current understanding describes trauma as an experience that is unbearable, intolerable and overwhelming, with the potential to impact us negatively in the moment and in the future. When an experience is "beyond the capacity for an individual to adapt effectively", we are in the realm of trauma (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 1) (Siegel, 2012b). Expanding on this, Maté describes trauma as "not *what* happened to [us], it's *what happens inside* [us] as a *result* of what happened to [us]" (in Benazzo, 2021) (Institute, 2020). Harmony is disrupted as we attempt

to disconnect from our feelings (Benazzo, 2021). When we experience trauma, the body and mind, which are inseparable as the embodied mind (Varela et al., 2016), become(s) profoundly altered (Levine, 1997, pp. 5-6; 2010). There is an internal conflict: something that needs to happen during a traumatic event doesn't/can't happen.



Figure 45: Swan, K., (2014). *Ouch 1*. [Intense pastel, pen, ink on paper]

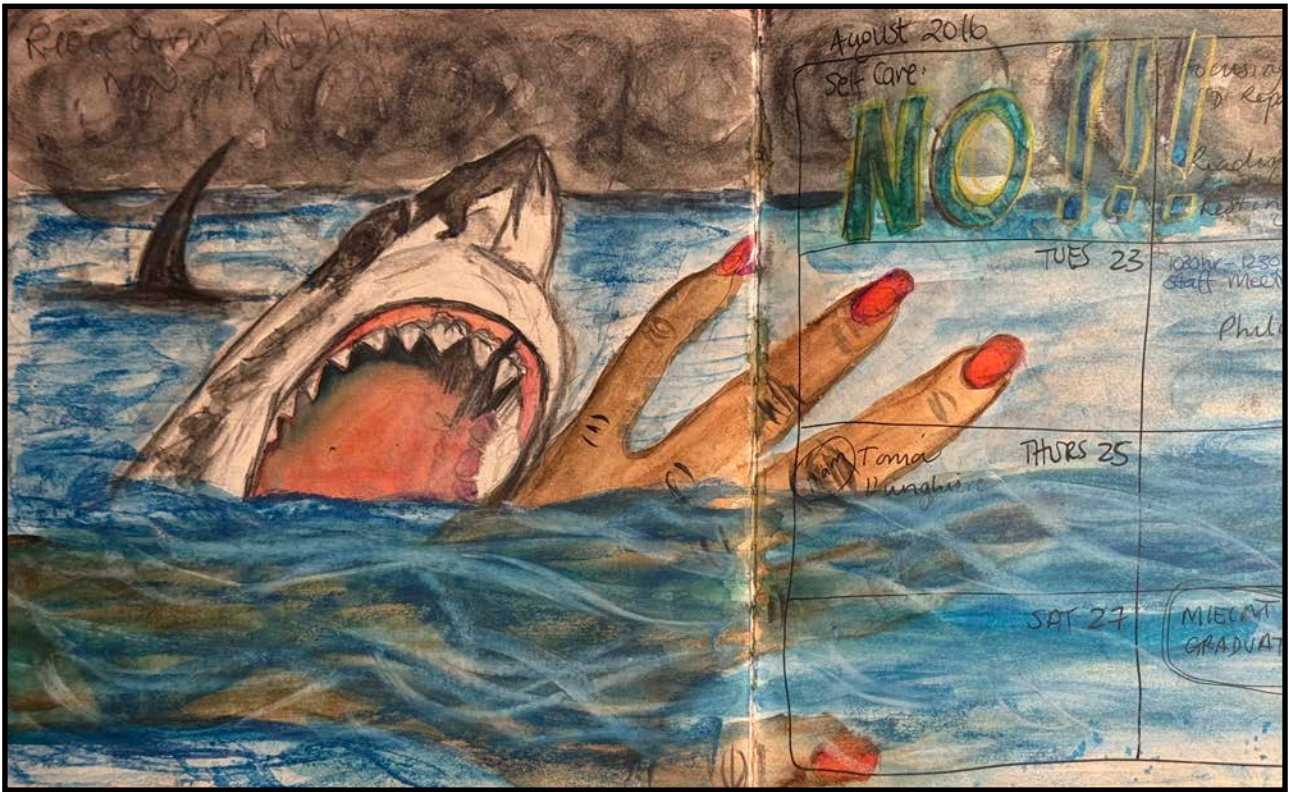


Figure 46: Swan, K., (2016). *Reoccurring nightmare of "the attack"*. [Intense pastel, pen, on paper]



Figure 47: Swan, K., (2014). *Ouch II*. [Intense pastel, gold marker, pen, ink on paper]

With too much to make sense of at the time, our physiology adapts immediately (and involuntarily) (Levine, 1997, 2010). Our perspective of the world adjusts in alignment with this best-ditch effort (Benazzo, 2021; Porges, 2011). When what needs expressing has no way of finding a voice, we can enter a kind of physical and emotional shutdown and the unresolved residue of frozen energy is locked into the nervous system (Levine, 1997, p. 19; 2010). Inherently wise as a first response, the trap comes with this shift in perspective. Porges reminds us that "if our body feels under a state of threat, it determines [how] all of the higher brain structures... function. When mobilised into threat, we're not deep thinkers; we don't make good decisions or solve big problems" (in Benazzo, 2021, 00:09:05).

So, not only do we re-calibrate to live in a world that is not as safe as it was before the traumatic event/situation occurred (perceptual bias) (Badenoch, 2008, p. 25), whether in fight, flight, or immobilised, we alienate ourselves from the parts of us who are in pain. As a result (our internal response to what happened). Fisher (2017) elaborates, noting that "[t]he brain seems to be organised to update and rewrite past experiences, integrating them with prior and subsequent events" (p. 10) - a magnificent manoeuvre to enhance our chances of survival. As we unknowingly employ this ongoing strategy to attempt to regulate our physiological state (Porges, 2011), the trauma response becomes ingrained. Van der Kolk points out that "[b]oth bodily states and mental constructs dynamically interact with environmental triggers to precipitate maladaptive behaviours" (in Porges, 2011, p. xvi). Looking at what happens to a physical injury, Maté reminds us that scar tissue develops over the once open and extremely sensitive wound over time. There are no nerve endings here, so our sensitivity to feeling is diminished. This place is inflexible, and nothing grows (in Benazzo, 2021). Yet again, we find ourselves automatically walking down familiar streets.

Not venturing through totally uncharted territory, I now call to mind the presence of others who have walked these streets before us and their influence on how and where we might travel in our lives.

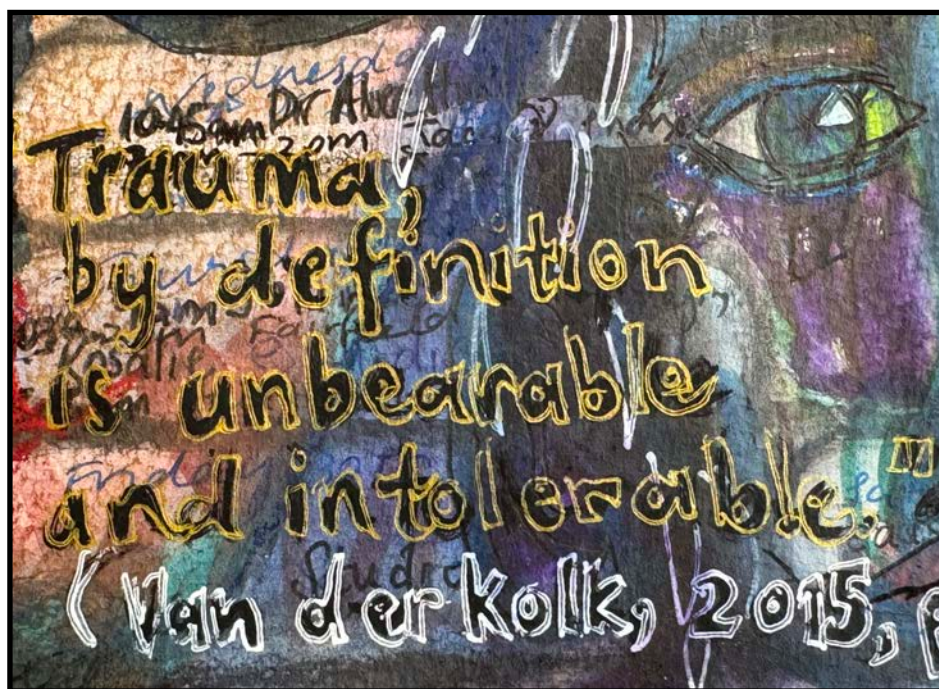


Figure 48: Swan, K., (2018). *Trauma*. [Mixed media]

Considering our history and how we get stuck

“How did I get here? Trickle becomes stream; tributaries run together, gathering force. The march of ideas carves channels into the landscape- ideas borne by individuals who are, in turn, swept away by its current. This river is our history. We walk in paths worn down by those who came before us. Each of us arrives midstream, joining a procession so entrenched as to appear as that’s just how it is. From deep within these grooves, it’s hard to imagine people just like us set it all in motion.”

(Sousanis, 2015, pp. 101-107)

It warrants acknowledgement that we don't come into the world with a totally blank hand of cards (refer to Liz's artefact front cover and pp. 71, 264-5 & 269), and we can appreciate that neither did those who came before us. The deck we draw from deals us those *givens* on Pascual-Leone's snowy slope- such as our DNA, genotype, phenotype, assigned gender at birth, ethnicity, our family of origin context and place within that or outside of that, our broader family culture and heritage; the social class we are part of; the type and amount of resources we have access to; our community, religious, political environment; the generation we belong to, and more.

With this starting hand comes some rules of the game we've been born into, a few explicit, many implicit. These rules can reinforce what Sousanis (2015) (2015) refers to as a

...flatness of sight, [where we] conform to a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour... lacking a critical dimension of potentialities to transcend their existing state. Here, even choices (of which there are seemingly many) are predefined. Forgotten [or unknown to us] is the wonder of what might be...in its place, a single chorus... *this is how it is*.

(pp. 6-7)

In addition, if we attune to what Hüebler and Maté (2018) denote as the atmosphere of "collective trauma", we realise that we are born into a broad energy field imbued with trauma- alive, layered and intergenerational (Benazzo, 2021). It can be experienced as "a quality" within our bodies (Benazzo, 2021). Tolle (2005) speaks of the collective pain body, which influences us throughout our lives- (refer to Liz's artefact pp. 93 & 177). Writing from what is known as 'Australia' on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Warrung peoples, I resonate with the entanglement of being born into an active field of a deeply ingrained, complex system of trauma concerning the living experience of our First Nations people. I feel the heaviness of collective denial in my body.

In Western civilisation, we live in "a society that is under chronic threat" (Porges, in Benazzo, 2021), and this pushes a normalisation of the wound. Maladaptive patterns like workaholism and other attempts to numb the larger wound of this common chronic threat are rewarded through collective denial, echoing Sousanis' (2015) *that's how the world is*. Maté (2010) cautions that the short-term pleasure and/or relief we aim to achieve when responding to trauma has negative impacts in the long term. It's easy to unconsciously be seduced into joining trauma and enrolling into pre-existing fragmentation by blindly buying into a pre-written societal agreement where we invest in and contribute to each other's symptoms. Unconscious trauma agreements between people become societal structures. Society shapes individuals. The shaping becomes ancestral from the individual and lands back with the collective. All are part of one interdependent system (Benazzo, 2021; Nonduality, 2018).

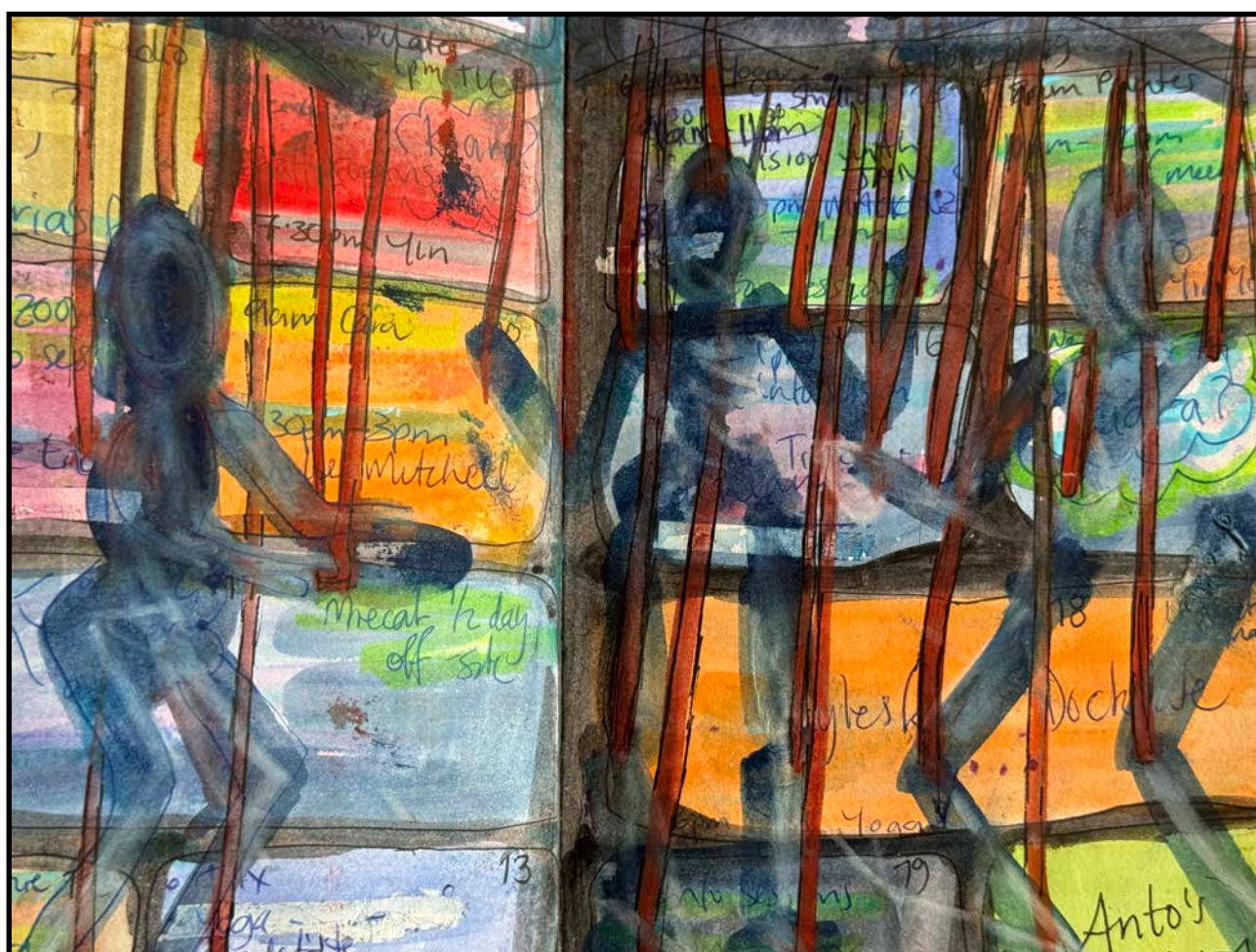


Figure 49: Swan, K., (2018). *This is how it is*. [Watercolour, pen on paper]

Having discussed various critical factors that influence *how* we get stuck in dissonant patterns of experiencing, I'd like to turn to another question that, as Whyte declares, 'has no right to go away.'

What keeps us stuck in these entrenched, outmoded ways of being?

Section 1.4

What keeps us stuck in the rut of dissonant patterns?

The features of the terrain of "being stuck in dissonant patterns" are more apparent, having considered the *how*. I have articulated how mental tracks get laid down and, through repetition, lead to automatic and entrenched ways of being and doing (Doidge, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018). While acknowledging the numerous established patterns that support our health and well-being, in this section, I look to consider *what keeps us stuck in dissonant patterns* - specifically those that feel out of alignment with what helps us to thrive in the long term. Once these problematic 'tracks' or neural pathways have been uncomfortably worn in, we may be fortunate enough to arrive at the question, "What holds us here?"

I'd like to revisit Nelson's autobiography (2018), focusing on Chapter II and the first part of Chapter III, to better understand the plight of being entrenched in the seemingly endless cycle of problematic patterns.

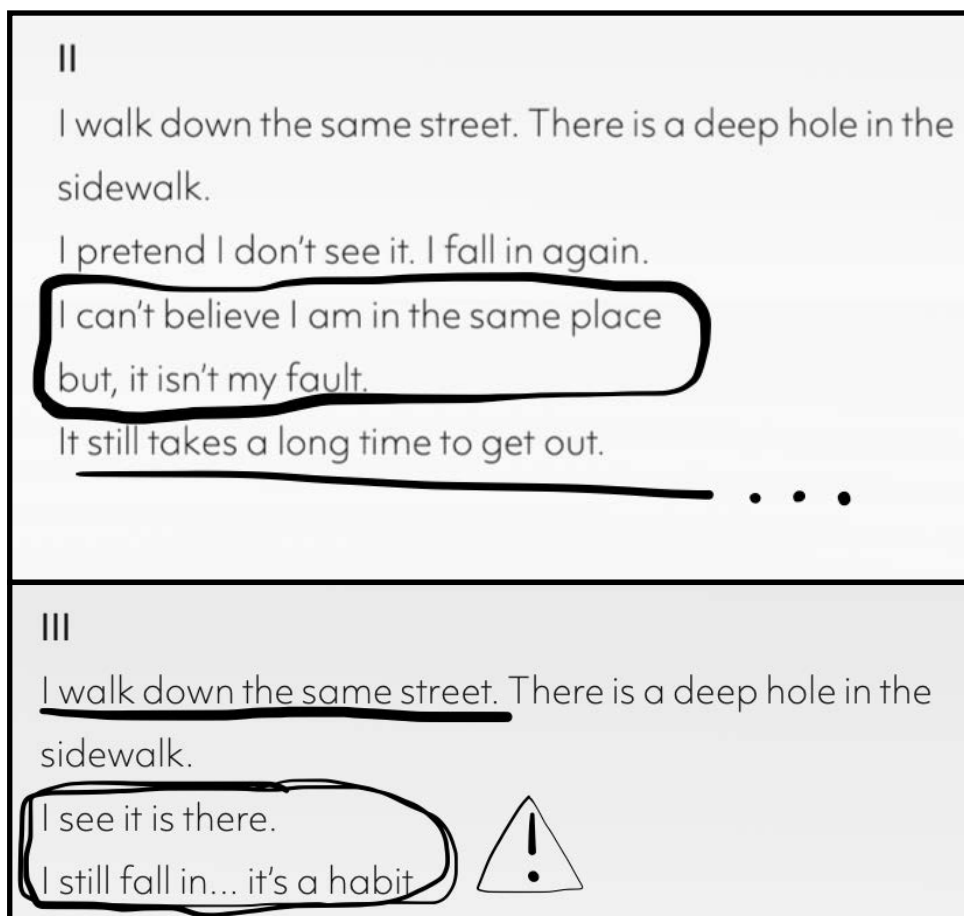


Figure 50: Swan, K., (2018). *Adaptations to Nelson's Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, Chapters II & III*. [Digital media]

Considering the brain and what keeps us stuck

Wiring and Rigidity- an update from the snowfields:

"You won't skid if you stay in a rut."

(Kin Hubbard, 1868-1930)

According to Siegel (2012b), although "cohesive states of mind" (pp. A1-16), can create in-the-moment integration, they run the risk of becoming problematic if they become too inflexible or rigid over time. Stuck on repeat, the ruts become extremely difficult to get out of, and no roadblock is in sight (Doidge, 2010).

Returning to Pascual-Leone's (2001) analogy introduced in the previous section, it is possible but increasingly difficult to recalibrate our trajectory towards preferred ways of being once we have spent time travelling up and down that snowy hill (or up and down that same street, in and out of the hole). The first point in considering what keeps us trapped in these trenches is that once our sleds are in motion (think core structural elements of a pattern), the speed and efficiency with which we travel make it incredibly difficult to change course (Doidge, 2010, pp. 209-210).

According to Doidge (2010), a "roadblock" of some kind is needed to support us in altering direction, and the absence of said roadblock is one major contributing factor to keeping us stuck. (Doidge, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2018; Pascual- Leone, 2001; Wondery, 2014). Siegel (2012b) also believes that "...cohesive ways of being exist in which we become stuck in repetitive states that reinforce their very existence" (p. 17-6). Because these ruts widen the more we use them, the pathway leading straight to the deep hole becomes more difficult to avoid. So it keeps happening, in the hole we go, over and over again, somewhat imprisoned by a deeply fixed trajectory.

The part of us attempting to meet a critical need becomes the self-designated driver, steering us along what has become the most established pathway to meet that need. This is done without consensus from other parts/states of mind (who also have needs), and so, with nothing in the way to slow us down, let alone stop or divert us, we are hurtling towards the same outcome. Because other needs are compromised in this process, we are internally conflicted, and something is out of integrity and not harmonious. Those of us who have been in it for the long haul with no roadblock in place are bound to keep finding ourselves in the same hole (refer to Eliza's artefact, pp. 191-193). Doidge (2010) recognises that "[t]o develop a new pathway, you have to block or constrain its competitor, which is often the most commonly used pathway" (p. 211); otherwise, we remain stuck.

Elaborating further, Doidge's findings indicate that "[c]ompetitive plasticity also explains why our bad habits are so difficult to break or 'unlearn'" (Doidge, 2010). Let's consider this in light of a pattern's structural elements in the context of this research. We learn that as we respond to initial triggers/stimuli in

repeated ways (e.g. what we sense, how we feel, how we respond, what we tell ourselves/make sense of the experience, how we envisage our future because of this, etc.) the reinforced associated neural pathways, according to Doidge, take over other areas of our brain map (2010). This occupation prevents these other areas, now at a competitive disadvantage, from being cultivated with preferred ways of being (Doidge, 2010, pp. 59-60). It takes a limited number of repetitions to learn something, entailing a chemistry of long-term potentiation, which promotes the effectiveness of synapse transmission between neurons. *Unlearning*, however, requires long-term depression- what Doidge describes as "the reduction of synaptic efficacy... often requir[ing] more repetition than learning" (Doidge, 2016, p. 10).

If it's more difficult to unlearn than to learn, then the focused effort we need to change entrenched patterns can actually contribute to keeping us stuck. Sousanis' (2015) sentiments resonate strongly with what we experienced in the research, arguing that disrupting deeply ingrained patterns takes "a profound nudge... a rupture in experience, illuminating boundaries and the means to transcend them" (p. 25). We find that the ongoing co-inquiries invite emergent ruptures in experience, where boundaries are illuminated through multimodal, emergent, relational processes (refer to artefacts for examples). Yet, even with a *disrupting nudge*, it still takes time to cultivate a willingness to utilise these "means to transcend" the said boundaries. Paradoxically, we collectively identify that even with awareness, there can be a misplaced comfort in the uncomfortable known- albeit far from a preferred way of being (refer to Liz's artefact, p. 154). This leads Eliza, Clare, Liz and me to identify that we live as though we have forever to change- even though we know this to be an illusion (refer to Eliza's artefact, pp. 143 & 144).

Liz acknowledges that "the closer we get to something important, the more resistance [she] feel[s]" (refer to Liz's artefact pp. 146 & 160-163). She appreciates the pain and hurt in staying stuck in a pattern of keeping others out and hiding her "true colours" in service of protecting her broken heart (pp. 56-60), and yet admits that "it's hard" to just be open/ change this engrained way of being (p. 58).

The first part of Clare's artefact literally depicts her pattern of rushing up and down the same pathway, busy and tied to unsustainable ways of "doing, without much being". Nothing is disrupting the well-travelled route of feeling lassoed into serving others and meeting their needs at the expense of meeting other needs for self-connection, self-awareness, openness and generosity of spirit in giving to others (refer to Clare's artefact, 00:06:00- 00:08:46).

Eliza's inquiry explores a pattern of misrepresentation, miscommunication and misinterpretation partly fuelled by the repeated masking of what's underneath to keep things good on the surface (refer to Eliza's artefact, pp. 16, 39, 56, 65 & 66, 173, 191 & 192).

As we will examine in Part 2 of this study, our ways of being and doing as we research together act as an accumulative roadblock, profoundly nudging us towards essential questions that have no right to go away.

Eliza's explorations lead her to questions such as, "What is it that I don't want to see?" (refer to Eliza's artefact, pp. 32 & 42, along with Fertilising Questions- p. xiii).

Liz comes to a weighing-up as she sits with the questions, "Do I really want to change?" "What do I lose by not letting this go?" And "What do I lose by letting this go?" (refer to Liz's artefact, pp. 161, 165 & 166).

Clare contemplates questions such as, "What should I do?", "Can I serve others willingly and myself lovingly?" "Can I use solitude to honour awareness?" "Can I allow others to help me, lead me, serve me?" "If I am my own puppeteer, can I become the master of my own destiny?," (refer to Clare's artefact, 00:08:50-00:12:06).

Maté (2010) invites us to consider that:

free choice comes from thinking: it doesn't come from emotions. It emerges from the capacity to think about your emotions. When you're operating in the habit [entrenched patterns] mode you are feeling, but those feelings are not being reflected upon. They are too powerful, they are too habitual.

(p. 317; Panksepp, 1998)

When we are stuck, the freedom to choose a preferred way of being seems futile and unrealistic. This is where Mapping the Elements of a Dissonant Pattern supports exploring the factors contributing to our patterns, what keeps us stuck in these patterns, and the relationship between these. Mapping offers us a way to bring awareness to what is present in addition to our automatic emotional responses. Thus, it invites the possibility of considering something beyond the known.

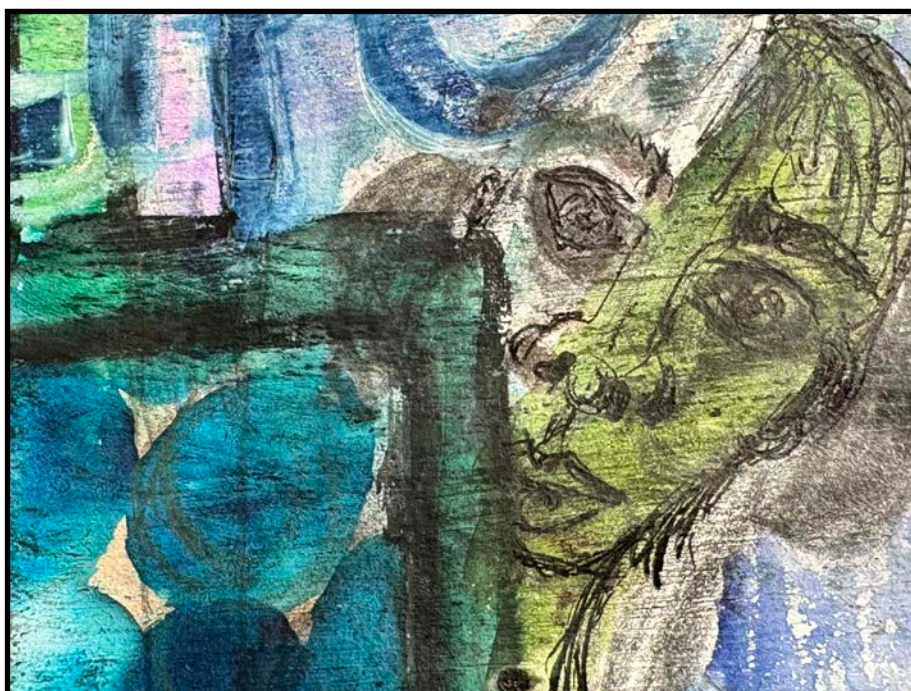


Figure 51: Swan, K., (2015). *Stuck*. [Watercolour, pen on paper]

Considering our environment, early relationships and trauma, and what keeps us stuck

Blindfolds affect our perspective- we can't change what we can't see... In considering what keeps us stuck through a lens of early relationships, trauma and the environment we were immersed in as babies and young children, I would like to begin with the findings of Badenoch (2008), who conveys that:

If we have experienced trauma in the first three years of our lives, we will most likely have very little to no explicit memory of what occurred. Our amygdala is the headquarters of what is known as procedural/ implicit memory: the only form of remembering available to us during approximately the first 12-18 months of life.

(p. 16)

Here, our earliest processes of meaning-making in the brain are generated, and we assess what warrants our attention and whether an experience is safe (Siegel, 1999a). Implicit memories contain constituents of sensations, behavioural drives, affective experience, perceptions, and images (van der Kolk, 2014) (aligning with elements of a dissonant pattern in the adjusted map). They are typically evoked or triggered when we find ourselves in situations we sense as being similar to the trauma (Doidge, 2010, pp. 229-230; Ogden et al., 2006, pp. xx-xx1; xxv; 236-239; Siegel, 1999b). Badenoch (2008) expands on this, clarifying that as experience is repeated, processes in the amygdala cluster our encoded memories into "mental models", developing generalised, nonverbal conclusions about how life works. She proposes that these deductions create:

anticipations of how life will unfold and remain largely below the level of conscious awareness, guiding our ongoing perceptions and actions in ways that tend to reinforce the foregone conclusions [further elements on the adjusted map]. We often experience these as The Truth or The Way Things Are, and when we do find words for them, they are often stated as axiomatic realities.

(pp. 24-25)

In co-inquiring with Liz, the relational context of her pattern includes family, and she describes being *excluded, not informed, and not kept in the loop*. Liz articulates feeling *invisible, irrelevant, and worthless in the eyes of the culture...* (refer to Liz's artefact, p. 22). As we explore the feelings of *pain, grief, loss and hurt* linked to this pattern, Liz connects directly to *being the eldest daughter, yearning for her mother's love, and the experience of not feeling good enough when her younger sister was born...* (refer to Liz's artefact, p. 24). The thread of early environment and experiences is interwoven through Liz's process,

where Liz takes on her mother's worldview as reality (refer to Liz's artefact pp. 56 & 57; 93-95; 101; 104-106; 109 & 167).

Listening to Maté reflect on this further, I am deeply moved when he asks, "How do you deal with not being wanted?" and then reveals, " You make yourself needed" (Benazzo, 2021, 00:53:35). I feel my eyes well as a lump forms in my throat and my heart literally aches as I take this in. This story echoes in my cells; as Liz affirms, *the child believed these memories were truthful. The adult, in hindsight, realises that the mother was protecting the child* (refer to Liz's artefact, p. 104). Unless we find ways of releasing and resolving that which sits outside of our conscious awareness, under the control of the amygdala, we risk being condemned to remaining enslaved by implicit memories of difficult experiences from our early childhood.

As we grow, the absence of trusted others to hold, support and understand us (Baylin, 2016; Hughes et al., 2016) significantly contributes to our propensity to remain stuck in the smallness of who and how we believe and experience ourselves to be. With this limited perspective, Sousanis (2015) reflects that "we risk following without reflection...when we stop questioning, we become transfixed as if by Medusa's gaze rendered inanimate, flat" (pp. 110-111). This occurs in the repetitive stories we tell ourselves in response to difficult experiences and/or trauma, along with the anticipations we blindly reinforce without looking up to check what else may be present and accessible.

The trap of a self-fulfilling prophecy: our perception of the world as unsafe reinforces the cues we pick up on. Siegel (2012a) writes of being "lost in familiar places", where our minds are predisposed to keep looking for circumstances with energy and information flow patterns similar to previously encountered settings. When what we are seeking resonates with challenges from the past, he clarifies that "this becomes a process that can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing old ways of being and 'creating [at worst] one's own worst nightmare'" (p. AI-46). Drawing on the Buddhist teaching that we create the world with our minds, Maté holds that we don't respond to what actually happens but rather to how we perceive what happens (Benazzo, 2021, 01:16:10) and that we keep re-creating the same world: affected by trauma, we respond to the past rather than the present moment (Benazzo, 2021, 01:16:55). Due to a long-held pattern of suppression and the enormous amount of energy we use to avoid feeling the associated pain (Benazzo, 2021, 01:23:15), it is easy to comprehend how we remain hooked in the loop of unhelpful patterns that sit outside our conscious awareness, and how in a way, our absence keeps this painful loop set to repeat. Understanding how patterns form and become entrenched is vital to knowing how to change them (Doidge, 2016).

A somewhat destructive enchantment holds us in these repetitive patterns of chaos and/or rigidity. Echoing the earlier paradox, where even a *profound nudge* is not always enough to move us, we find security in the familiar. The daunting unknown keeps us travelling the worn-out, often destructive paths in search of certainty. Our health and sense of well-being are often the casualties of such cycles (Siegel, 2012b).

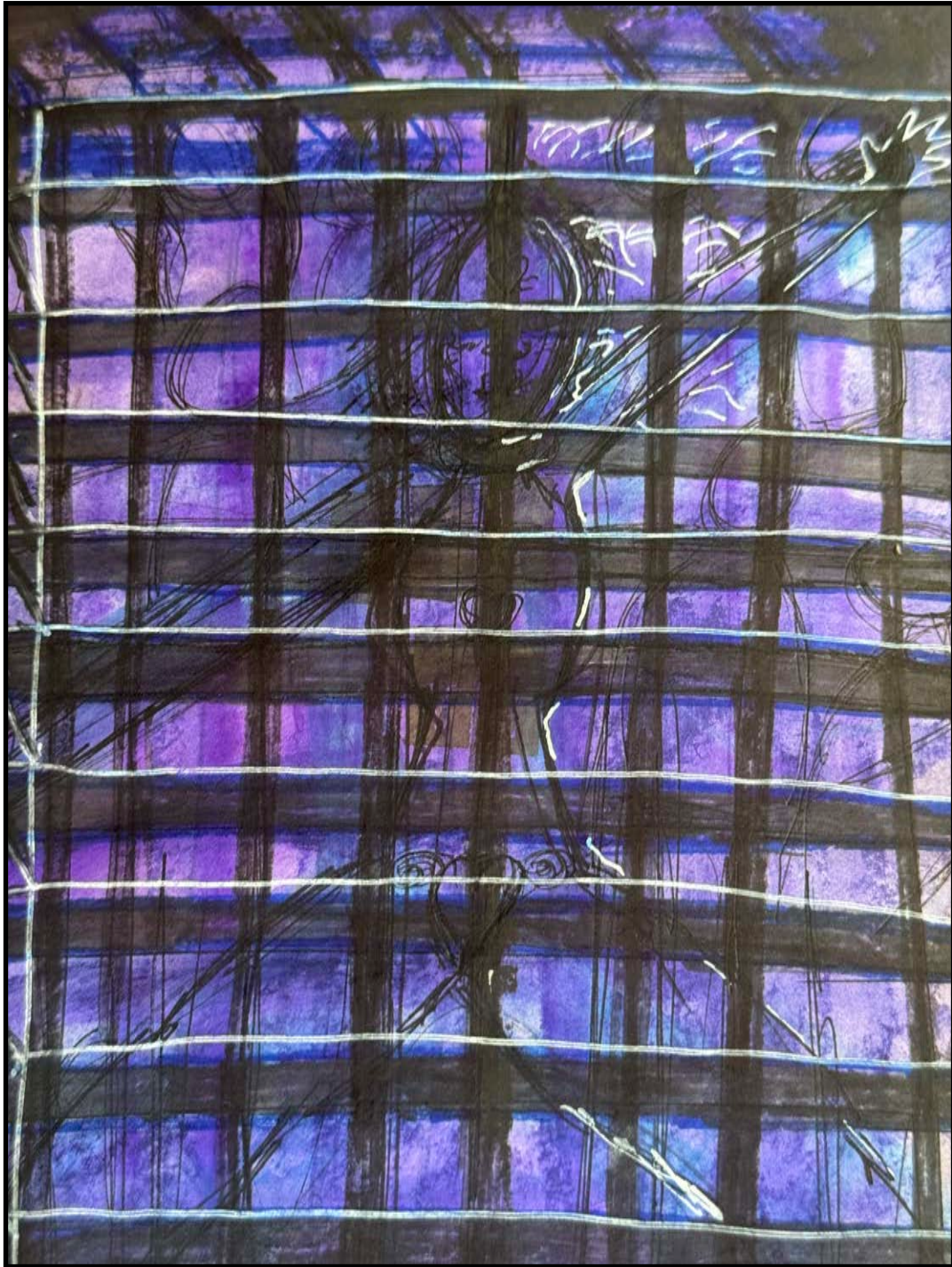


Figure 52: Swan, K., (2018). *Imprisoned*. [Watercolour, pen on paper]

Imprisonment of this kind locks us into emotional responses and narratives that we repeatedly tell ourselves about the nature of ourselves and our relationship with the world... *this is how things are*. From the trenches, we are not open to change. Aspects of our personalities become rigidly patterned, and we are stuck... in Siegel's words, "far from the harmonious and emergent flow of the river of integration" (Siegel, 2012b, pp. 17-6 & A1-46). To add insult to injury, the ongoing internal conflict drives us to seek repeated outmoded/ unhelpful attempts at emotional regulation and (Doidge, 2016; Ogden, 2019; Siegel, 2012b) resolution where we are "continuing the action, or rather the attempt at action, which began when

the thing happened and [we] exhaust [our]selves in these everlasting recommencements" (Janet, 1919/1925 as cited in Ogden et al., 2006, p. xx). Unresolved needs remain unsatisfied, and each failed attempt at resolution is a re-writing of the conflict we attempt to resolve. We see this in those of us living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; the traumatic memories are re-transcribed every time we remember (Doidge, 2016). Memories of traumatic events produce the same embodied responses (sensory, affective, narrative, chemical) as a re-experiencing of the actual event all over again. Dispenza (2017) describes this, proposing that "[b]y repeatedly recalling the experience, [we] unintentionally anchor... [our] brain and body to the past" (p. 3). Then comes the ultimate offence: our cell receptors, if not chemically "nourished" by the stress hormones that connect to these dissonant patterns, will signal our brains to repeat the thoughts that feed the narrative that will trigger the sensory and emotional activation (Dispenza, 2012, 2015) and we find ourselves stuck in what feels like the Buddhist/ Chinese traditional "realm of hungry ghosts" (Maté, 2010).

Considering our history and what keeps us stuck

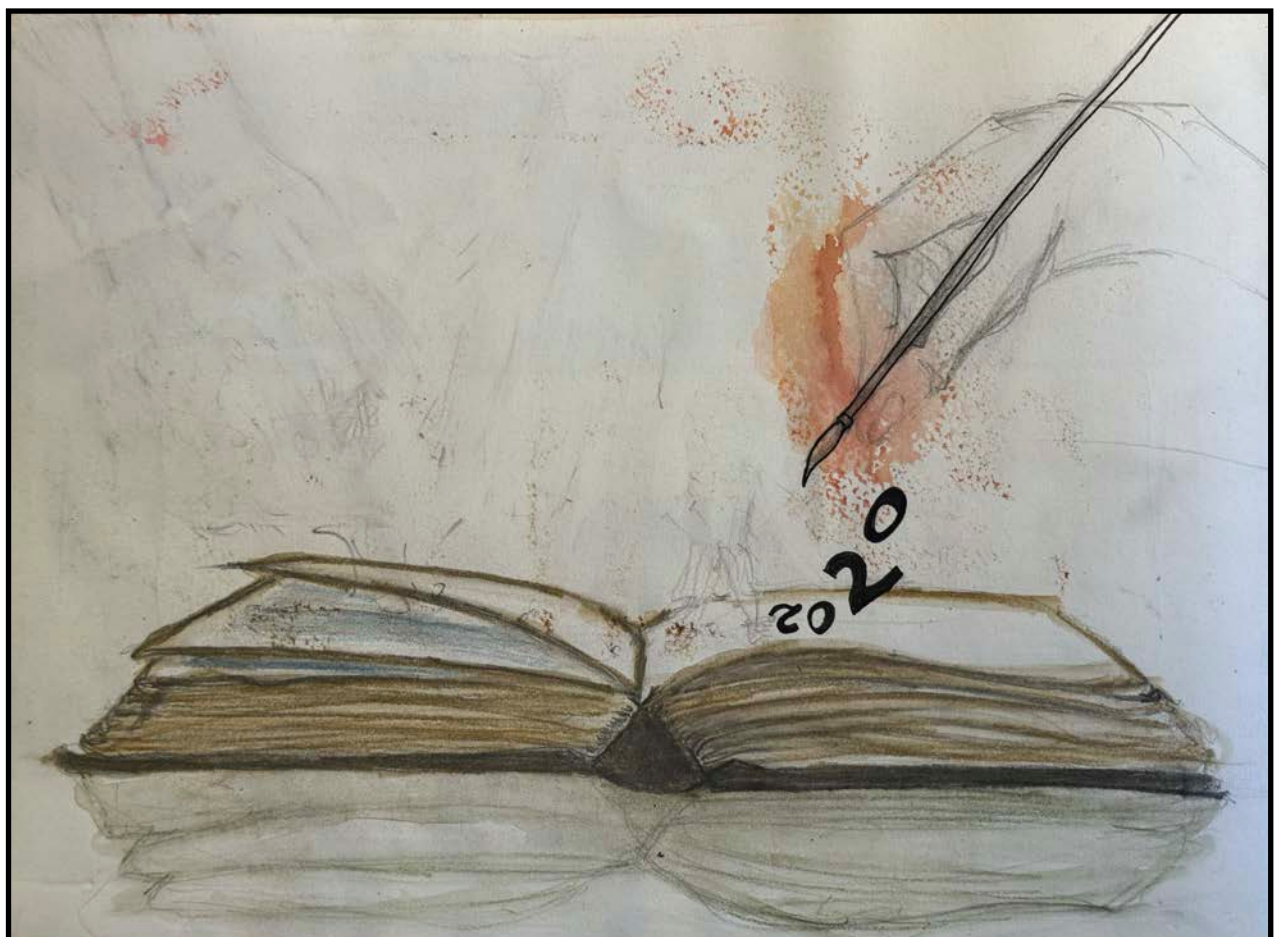


Figure 53: Swan, K., (2020). *What stories do I keep re-telling?*. [Pencil, watercolour and marker]

Once upon a time...

[S]tories... are kind of a doorway, openings, vehicles to transport us... [they] sustain us and offer spaces of freedom. [Stories] let us reach across time and space to share in another's viewpoint, touch another's thoughts, and make them part of our own stories. To be clear, I don't mean only wondrous tales, but that most human of activities, the framing of experience to give it meaning.

(Sousanis, 2015, p. 95)

I'd briefly like to consider the inherent challenge that comes when we are born into relational fields and are shaped by other people's stories that hold residual pain and suffering yet to be integrated (e.g. Liz's mum's story of a cruel, unsafe world, and my Dad's story of *we have to work twice as hard to achieve half as much, that's how we are...*). Without other reference points, these stories can become our own, locking us into patterned ways of perceiving and being in the world rather than opening us up to experiencing spaces of freedom and possibility. This can give rise to relational collusion, where our patterns meet, shape and are shaped by ongoing interactions with those in our familiar relational constellations. It can be challenging to shift ways of being when everyone in that relational system (e.g. family) sees us as being a certain way- and needs us to fill a particular role. The mantra of *this is how we are*, resounds. Looking further, Maté highlights that we conform when society reflects escapism as the norm. For example, "it can all line up and look pretty normal" (Benazzo, 2021, 00:38:00). If we live in a society that generally doesn't address discomfort, NOT having courageous conversations about our own or others' behaviour becomes the often unquestioned code of conduct.

Finally, to question the status quo is to risk finding ourselves an outlier. From this place, we may embark on the endless quest to hunt down those responsible for our plight, as though that might *un-stick* us... I'm saddened to acknowledge that during the earlier years of this research (and for decades prior, if I am honest with myself and with you), I lost my way in this place, desperate to lay blame for past events elsewhere. The irony is that I faced my own reflection at every turn. At first, this only reinforced the familiar narrative that *it's all my fault*, increasing my becoming more entrenched in suffering. We must learn to recognise when we are driven to find fault and blame, lest we continue to wander but subsequently with no idea how to get out of that painful yet familiar hole and the reinforced rut of entrenchment that leads us there.

Re-reviewing the factors that keep us stuck in dissonant patterns, we can appreciate how they intersect and inform one another, colluding to keep us entrenched. Once stuck in the rut of a dissonant pattern, the odds of staying stuck appear to be incredibly high. However, all is not lost. In closing this section on what keeps us stuck, I'd like to revisit Nelson's autobiography to consider the rest of Chapter III and make the following tweaks:

III

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.

I see it is there.

I still fall in... it's a habit.



It's not my fault, but now that I know where I am,

My eyes are open,

I can take responsibility as to what happens from here. It's okay, I'm not alone.

I know where I am.

I explore with others to companion me to make sense of this experiencing. We find integrative ways of being and doing together that foster connection and harmony. It

~~It is my fault.~~

takes trust, commitment, loving presence, creativity, and time to grow new

~~I get out immediately.~~

preferred pathways together.

Eventually, I realise that the terrain of my experiencing is different. It feels good.

Figure 54: Swan, K., (2018). *Adaptations to Nelson's Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, Chapter III*. [Digital media]

Section 1.5

Conclusion

Reflecting on our discussion about the *Nature of a Pattern in the context of this research, How We Get Stuck and What Keeps Us Stuck*, I acknowledge that establishing patterns is undeniably conducive to our evolution, growth and development. In Part 2, I will clarify how I view integration in relation to the patterns we explore.

The significant learning in this section recognises that entrenched, dissonant patterns are critical signposts, pointing us to aspects of our experiencing where there is a need for something to shift and re-calibrate. Expanding on this knowing, I have refined and developed Lett's original model of Mapping elements of a dissonant pattern, adjusting and adding core elements that emerged as significant through the research.

Nelson's autobiography in *Five Short Chapters* offers a resonant metaphor of terrain to use when thinking about the experience of being stuck in dissonant patterns. Pascual-Leone's metaphor of the snowy hill refines the nuances of this terrain, illuminating how we get stuck and what keeps us stuck. We look at the importance of understanding how patterns *form and stick* as critical to changing them, and Whyte (2012) invites us to consider the value of sitting with the difficult questions that emerge from the depths (of co-inquiry in this context) to re-calibrate towards becoming more integrated.

Siegel, (2010b) notes that both the absence of illness and the presence of well-being share the central process of integration which "illuminates a direct pathway toward health" (p. 64) as it is "the fundamental neural process that can be created to enhance our functioning" (Siegel, 2010c; 2012b, pp. 14-15). So, it is from this place that I would like to elaborate on the final tweak made to Nelson's poem in the previous section. In Part 2, I will explore and discuss what emerges in the research as significant in *how we are with one another* and *what we do together*: our ways of being and doing that foster and cultivate integration in our interconnected process of becoming as we feel for and re-orient towards new streets.

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