

## NURTURING RELATIONAL FORMS OF PRESENCING MASTERY

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**Abstract:** Drawing on a body of collaborative work in communities of practice and research exploring holistic approaches to social transformation, in this article I discuss how a triune of community, deep participation, and embodied play may aid the cultivation of presencing mastery. For the purpose of this article, I explore presencing as a relational practice, the mastery of which requires us to come into fuller, more conscious engagement with ourselves, one another, and the world at large. To enable the deepening of each of these relationships, I make the case for integrative inner work, cultivating participatory ways of knowing that go beyond cognitive intelligence and that tap somatic, emotional, social, ecological, and spiritual insights. I posit that such integrative whole-person development is central for presencing mastery to be realised. I also discuss how communities of practice provide essential scaffolding on this journey, helping us to address our blind spots and automaticities in perception, thought and action. Creative practices and embodied play can be greatly beneficial here, loosening perceptual filters and enabling between us more open, receptive, and fluid states of consciousness that provide a kaleidoscopic appreciation of our inner and outer worlds and their complexities.

**Keywords:** Presencing mastery, communities of practice, integrative practice, holistic change facilitation, play, deep participation, intercorporeality, other ways of knowing, inner work, active receptivity

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### I. Remembering relationships

What is presencing mastery and how can we cultivate it? I gaze at my computer screen, mind open and still. I thought I knew what I was going to write – until I sat down and attempted to write it. *My gaze shifts. I'm drawn to look out of the window. Rain is falling from the grey skies outside my home in the green surrounds of the Northwest of England. My eyes soften as I sink into the embrace of the impressionist landscape before me, depicting shades of green and grey, suffused with soft purples, whites, and browns.* Why is this relevant? I ask myself, then a deeper thought surfaces: It is relevant because my shift in gaze entailed a widening and mellowing of awareness – from the still and rigid, black letters on my computer screen to the dancing colours of nature outside my window. *Rain droplets hang poised, my breath*

*suspended, from the tips of leaves. In the pause I drop deeper into being, feel the pulsing of vital energies. I see a single drop surrender to gravity. I exhale, sensing my body more deeply.* As soon as I considered the question, my attention broadened, taking me from the confines of my rational mind to the dynamic wildness of nature, enlivening my being. Gazing through the window, the aperture of my awareness opened, and I was reminded of the wider, wilder world outside *and inside* of me. Presencing can remind us of this wilder world and its mystery. It can call us into a fuller participation, a dance, inviting us to deepen our relationship and to broaden our possibilities.

So, what is presencing mastery and how can we cultivate it? From my experience of working in communities of practice dedicated to presencing and holistic change facilitation, a triune relational model emerges, consisting of *community, participation* and *play*: three elements that intertwine in my experience and inform one another in service of presencing. In the following I set the scene with considerations of inner development in service of social change, broadly mapping some of the challenges I see before us. I then address each element in turn, highlighting learning and insights that have emerged from my practice and research in community initiatives over the past decade.

## II. The conundrum of inner and outer

Many of us likely embrace the presupposition that presencing mastery requires individual effort, to enable the cultivation of inner skills, qualities, or capacities that we consider prerequisites for presencing. I certainly share that view, and yet I also believe that our mastery of practice is modulated by our practice-contexts and the action potential they afford us as individuals and as groups. The flourishing and mastery of practice is not automatically guaranteed if we work on ourselves by ourselves. Many different environmental and interpersonal factors – from the physical spaces we work in, to the wider landscapes and climate, to our interpersonal relations and the invisible norms of practice set by our communities and organisational contexts – shape what is possible in practice. Therefore, it is important that we pay attention to the contexts that surround and inform our practice, as much as we must make an effort to commit to inner cultivation. Inner and outer perpetually interweave in complex interplay.

The notion of inner development in service of outer change has gained traction in recent years (Woiwode et al, 2021; O'Brien, 2021; Wamsler et al., 2022); and I support and champion the idea myself, subscribing specifically to transpersonal and integrative approaches to social engagement (Rothberg & Coder, 2013; Patten, 2018). There is an increasing body of transdisciplinary research and scholarship that suggests

that the deepest leverage points for systems change, effectively addressing our global crises, are our inner states, worldviews and values (Wamsler et al., 2021). At the root of this proposition is the idea that the crises have been generated by a deep-seated sense of disconnection: from ourselves, from each other, and from nature. Embracing this belief, we are tasked with changing the story, remembering our taproot of being, our deep well of connection that joins us with the world at large (Eisenstein, 2013). The Vietnamese Buddhist monk and activist Thich Nhat Hanh called this *interbeing* (Robins, 2010). Aiming to link internal and external transformation towards greater sustainability, Wamsler et al. (2021) have developed a model which highlights a range of transformative capacities grouped into five clusters – awareness, connection, insight, purpose, and agency – that influence our perceptions and actions. Wamsler et al. (2021) also emphasise that certain intermediary factors, such as self-efficacy – the belief that one’s actions generate impact – inform how we express our agency in the world.

Critically, Wamsler et al. (2021, p.7) prompt for further research into contextual and enabling factors “that could support transformative qualities/ capacities and go beyond instrumental approaches to behavioural and systems change (e.g. policy incentives and nudging)”. There have been calls to better our understanding of how context-specific conditions and structural drivers modulate our individual and collective agency (Wamsler & Restoy, 2020; Boda et al., 2022, Cooper & Gibson, 2022). As stated in the opening of this section, I share these concerns for an overemphasis of the inner dimensions in the design of projects and interventions attempting to address our contemporary problems. As I see it, in Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and developed (WEIRD) contexts we tend to lean into the individualisation of intentionality and responsibility, underestimating how social, cultural, and structural dimensions condition our agency through deeply ingrained patterns. I mention this here because it relates to how we conceive of presencing mastery.

For the purposes of this article, I will focus on presencing practice as a collective endeavour, where we work with one another to cultivate presencing mastery *between us*, paying attention to the fine web of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal interactions. As Nicol (2015) puts it, we are embedded in reciprocal fields of consciousness relating to our familial, social, cultural, and ecological milieu. These fields of consciousness influence our mental patterns, perceptions and behaviours. Therefore, as we champion notions of *interbeing*, *interthinking* and *interacting* (Wamsler et al., 2021), we need to be careful not place the responsibility for transformation solely at the feet of individuals when it comes to the mastery of practice. Individual and collective efforts best accompany one another, for presencing is a participatory practice,

informed by the multi-dimensional contexts which shape what happens in the space between us. There is an injunction, calling us to take care of one another, presencing to each other's needs, capacities, and blind spots. In their exploration of social fields in awareness-based systems change Pomeroy and Herrmann (2023) speak of the *affordance* of social fields, i.e., what behaviours, thoughts, and feelings the fields invite, as well as discourage. In co-presencing, we need to pay attention to affordance as it plays out between us and realise that “affordance is not experienced in a uniform way. Individuals differ in their propensity to ‘take up the invitation’ and go along with a certain atmosphere or pattern of interaction” (Pomeroy and Herrmann, 2023, p. 12).

Moreover, in many WEIRD contexts, *cognicentrism* prevails, as Ferrer (2003) puts it, giving the rational mind privilege over other ways of knowing and meaning-making involving our intuitive, emotional, somatic, and spiritual intelligences. These intelligences are vital in cultivating presencing mastery, as they expand our windows of perception, offering new perspectives and possibilities. Cognicentrism leads us to devise intellectually driven training regimes, prompting us to subjugate our multi-dimensional nature to extrinsic goals and performance measures – which most likely inhibit the autonomous maturation of our other intelligences, and which can potentially catalyse individual and collective existential burnout. That may sound overly dramatic! However, as Ferrer (2003) points out, Western education has been so focused on the development of the rational mind that our somatic and emotional worlds are not only under-developed but “frequently wounded, distorted, or manifesting regressive tendencies” (p. 26). Therefore, when cultivating paths of presencing mastery we need to pay attention how this plays out in our presencing practice and trainings. Are we speaking a lot from the mind? Or are we allowing non-rational voices to come to the fore? Do we give them enough breathing space? Do we trust them? Do we follow them and allow them to be expressed?

Other ways of knowing have an immense role to play as we open to and dwell in the space at the bottom of the U between the gestures of *letting go* and *letting come*. Gunnlaugson (2020) in his work with Dynamic Presencing has amplified this space, introducing the gesture of *letting be*, giving practitioners permission to slow down, and linger in the depths of their embodied experience and intercorporeality. To me, this slowing down is vital as it opens the aperture of our awareness to subtler information and impulses that can help us evolve as practitioners and human beings. When non-rational information presences itself during practice and we pay full attention to it, the energy between us shifts. There is a distinctive silence, perhaps a pause that descends as the chatter of mind subdues. The moment feels more charged – sometimes spine-

tingling, sometimes breath arresting, sometimes presencing itself through a rapidly beating heart, or a sudden urge to move! – as there is a heightened sense of potency in the group interaction. In these moments I know that I must give myself and others permission to trust and follow through, as the mind can jump in and form premature judgements of the emerging information and seemingly random impulses. Cultivating an open mind, open heart and open will involves a continuous recommitment in the moment: A commitment to trust that emerging *in-form*ation which is presencing itself between us, and to let it *in-form* us in word and action.

Given all this, it feels vital to me that we recognise several things: 1.) That inner work in service of presencing mastery is never simply or exclusively an individual and rational endeavour; 2.) that beyond a wholesome discipline, presencing practices are not best driven by extrinsic targets as external orientations can hinder autonomous emergence; and 3.) that presencing work may not be readily standardised and/or up-scaled to meet pre-configured timelines and ulterior motives. In my opinion then, holistic paths for the cultivation of presencing mastery are needed and will emerge when undertaken in nurturing and discerning communities of practice which honour the whole integrity of individuals, recognising their complexity in intricate entanglement with the world at large, and supporting their wholesome and creative participation in this larger, more than human, world.

### III. The need for community

What then do we need from communities of practice to cultivate presencing mastery? A question I have been living whilst facilitating the co-creation of the *Conscious Community Initiative* (CCI, Alef Trust, 2020) and *Nurturing the Fields of Change* (NFC, Alef Trust, 2023), a community of practice and programme dedicated to exploring principles of holistic change facilitation. As Walsh et al. (2020) note, in contexts of collective learning, we learn best when we are accompanied by others who are inquiring alongside us and when the conditions are such that trusting relationships can emerge in which we can feel safe and brave enough to be more fully ourselves in exploration with others. Going beyond the original definition of a community of practice as “a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Murray & Salter, 2014, p. 4), we have endeavoured to configure our CCI and NFC as *integrative we-spaces* (Gunnlaugson & Brabant, 2016; Patten, 2018), aiming to seed the emergence of collective wisdom through practices honouring the greater whole within, between, and beyond us.

Much learning has been generated in our shared inquiries which revolve around the braiding of conceptual explorations, reflective dialogue, and experiential practices involving embodied, contemplative, and creative methods. Our research findings from the first two years of the CCI (Bockler & Hector, 2022) highlight diverse considerations for the creation of integrative we-spaces that may be conducive for presencing mastery as they permit and enable more holistic sensing and meaning-making. We noted the necessity for deep ongoing attunement to the fractal nature of our work,

“...with self-similar patterns and characteristics repeating across varying project contexts and dimensions. ... Critically, holistic change facilitation entails a conscious attending to these fractal dynamics, noticing and calibrating their interplay. As we have found, this requires *active receptivity*, paying moment-to-moment attention to the dynamics at play in every dimension—interior and exterior, individual and collective—to nurture project coherence and tap collective intelligence. (p. 72)

*Active receptivity* emerged as a key relational skill, involving the continuous calibration of small, immediate adjustments in perception and action arising from moment-to-moment awareness in the relational space, like a playful movement improvisation arising between dancers. Active receptivity enabled us to be with one another more deeply, sustaining together the contact with the generative sources of our being. It enabled a communal fostering and growth of presencing mastery, which was nurtured through the shared indwelling at the bottom of the U. Dwelling there in *letting be* felt enlivening. Our holistic sensitivity to the collective and its informational field deepened, and the whole began to presence itself between us through shared imagery, emotions and felt sensations. After a decade of practice, I consider active receptivity an essential element for cultivating presencing mastery. In my experience active receptivity is enabled by

- inviting frequent pauses in dialogue and action,
- slowing down in movement and expression, to become aware of the subtler facets of our lived experiences,
- noticing what attitudes and ways of being we experience as supportive and enabling within and between one another,
- acknowledging that embodied experiences are generated between us and ripple between us,
- practicing the co-regulation of vulnerable emotions emerging in our groups,
- welcoming a diversity of views, noticing what was calling at the margins of our awareness,

- and developing trust and courage in engagement with challenging and emotionally charged material.

In the NFC which is in its first iteration this year (2023), the desire for whole-hearted connection is presenting itself, as many are experiencing the collective onslaught of anxiety, stress and grief arising from our global predicaments. There is also hunger for joint discernment and for communal care, expressing a need for balance between envisioning a future worth living for and navigating the present moment with grace, honesty, and humility, as well as compassion for self, others, and the world. And there is the recognition that we need one another in all this, to cultivate new stories and patterns in our psychosocial matrix.

If well configured and skillfully held (not that these things are ever a given!), holistic approaches to presencing mastery and, more broadly, awareness-based systems change enable engagement with the deeper sources beyond our ordinary egoic perspectives, opening our whole being to the larger, wilder emergent reality between us. Perceptions in ordinary, ego-centred states of consciousness are usually more self-referential and constrained by processes of sensory gating or filtering (Gilligan, 2012) which limit what we consciously perceive to what is of immediate relevance to our own biology, as well as to our beliefs and expectations. That is why many contemplative and spiritual traditions feature practices to help us attenuate the hold of the ego and open the aperture of awareness, so we may perceive more of the world at large. Similarly, the first gesture of presencing, *letting go*, intends to help loosen the “reducing valves” (Huxley, 1954) that constrain our perception of our emergent shared experience. As I have elaborated elsewhere (Bockler, 2021), in practice this means establishing an initiatory framework that can “support the transition of participants from an ordinary to a liminal (threshold) state ... hold them in this liminal state, and then aid their safe return” (p. 28). In the liminal state, new possibilities may become available to individuals and groups.

Designing and facilitating communities of practice that commit to presencing mastery requires an ongoing commitment to listen to the exterior and interior, as well as individual and collective dimensions of our intertwined experiences. We need to honour our individual unfolding; and we need to come into deeper relationship with one another whilst respecting our self-authorship. We must be careful not to inculcate oppressive, totalising unities of perception and narrative, to which all must subscribe. Rather, we want to welcome diversity in interbeing. As Nicol (2015) puts it:

Such a reality is not imposed unilaterally from above but (in conjunction with inspired leadership) emerges spontaneously from the voluntary participation of individuated persons

and cultures that recognize the advantages of collaborative engagement. Not only does this form of collectivity permit diversity, it actively encourages it to maximize the collective intelligence of the whole. (p. 162)

We each partake in life through a unique kaleidoscope of intersectionality (Cooper, 2016); our personal histories and positionality give rise to a unique blend of individual and collective possibilities and constraints that influence our presencing practice. Inner development in service of transformation is best done in the company of others sharing the path and appreciating the complexities of practice. The patient presence of others can help us in many ways, enabling us to co-regulate our nervous systems, to perceive blind spots and unhelpful habits, to keep us accountable, and to provide us with support and validation as well as opportunities for meeting our growing edges. This said, group work can also have its pitfalls. Even as we aspire towards wisdom, we can succumb to group think and collective folly (Bockler, 2022; Briskin et al., 2009). And so, in sum, our work is best cultivated in multi-faceted ways, thereby potentiating our holistic sensitivities, and anchoring our commitment in accountability towards self, other, and world.

#### IV. The need for participation

The kind of engagement I am describing above and that I believe will help us move towards robust forms of collective presencing mastery entails a participation in the deepest taproots of being. To me, presencing mastery means living in conscious engagement with these taproots or sources. As I have highlighted elsewhere (Bockler, 2021), I embrace a transpersonal perspective, positing that “psyche and nature are not two but one” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 38). Our inner nature is embedded in Nature at large. Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, we partake in an unbroken whole that is in a perpetual state of flow, or *holomovement* (Bohm, 1980). Presencing mastery is thus cultivated when we intend to align with this holomovement. This is not as obscure or abstract as it sounds. As a performing artist, to me it feels like dancing with the world. *I breathe with the trees outside my window, I let them guide me in writing the next sentence. I remind myself to connect with the world at large simply by remembering it and opening my senses to it, and that often!* In the communities of practice that I help facilitate what happens in the room emerges between us and from beyond. There is a constant flow of information and impulses rippling across the shared fields of consciousness. For example, during a recent NFC ‘case clinic,’ sensing that we got caught in the fast flow of intellectual musings, I invited a group of practitioners to pause and extend awareness towards the ground, sensing into heart and abdomen whilst connecting to earth. Some of us moved from chairs to sitting or lying on the ground. The decent into the abdomen felt like



entering what fellow NFC practitioner McTiernan (2023) describes as the Amazonian rainforest:

...a few hundred years back: a vast territory of unknown, explosively fecund power, layers upon layers of diversity balanced with each species within its specific niche; creased valleys concealing ancient cultures in perfect harmony with nature, cascading waterfalls and brooding mirror-like still waters, mountain-top views of boundless open skies above the cloud-covered jungle. (para 1)

Felt sense exercises can connect us to the ground of being, to the deeper sources of our embodied presence. Following our joint descent in the NFC case clinic, the room was still and silent, there was permission to be, there was a pregnant spaciousness that shifted us into a different kind of dialogue, more sensory and emotional in nature, literally shifting the perceptual possibilities for our work. Presencing mastery is cultivated by dwelling more and more in this embodied presence and letting it guide us in what wants to happen next.

As we become more aware of and attuned to these deeper currents of information we can come into co-creative relationship with them. To me, that is the ultimate potential of collective presencing practice. If we are aligned with the deeper currents, presencing can even be a form of *subtle activism* (Nicol, 2015) influencing the collective fields of consciousness that animate humanity and bring greater global integration and coherence.

Acknowledging the complexities at play in this work, I noted earlier that the ubiquitous *cognicentrism* in WEIRD contexts presents a particular problem in presencing and other change facilitation practices, as it gives the rational mind power over our other ways of knowing – emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual – and thereby tends to inhibit their autonomous intelligence. I find the guidance of Ferrer (2003) most helpful here, who proposes:

What is needed, then, is *to create spaces in which these human dimensions can heal and mature according to their own developmental principles and dynamics, not according to the ones that the mind thinks are most adequate*. Only when our body, instincts, sexuality, and heart are allowed to mature autonomously, will they be able to sit at the same table with our minds and co-create a truly integral development and spiritual life. In developmental terms, we could say that, before being integrated, these human dimensions need to be differentiated. (p. 26)

To this end, in our NFC community of practice we have co-created a programme that supports those working with presencing and other change facilitation approaches to engage in integrative development Ferrer (2003). I posit that integrative development is pivotal to supporting the cultivation of presencing mastery as it helps to awaken and mature our capacities in a holistic way. Critically, Ferrer differentiates between integral practice and integral training. Whilst the former is less structured and

more feminine in nature, aiming to engender our capacities and potentials through gentle holding and inward listening, the latter seeks to exercise these potentials through disciplined and structured action, taking a more masculine stance. In our NFC programme we have placed emphasis on integral practice, attuning to individual practice needs alongside a calendar of collective practice sessions and reflective meetings that provide time and space for our inner development whilst we are actively engaged in change facilitation projects.

I sense that there is great potential here to deepen the corpus of presencing practices, by bringing integral practice and training directly into presencing projects and training. We need to explore and acknowledge where we have been hijacked by the mind and habituated to approach presencing with more masculine attitudes that may be undermining the potential for organic emergence. For each of us, masculine and feminine ways of working need to be in conducive balance; and we need to listen in carefully, to calibrate our approaches, noticing day to day what we may need for our embodied, relational, spiritual, emotional, and mental lives to flourish, so that our paths of cultivating presencing mastery are informed by this holistic wisdom. The witnessing and nurturing presence of others can be enormously helpful here, as can be immersion in natural spaces radiating with vitality and abundance. Presencing practice in outdoor spaces can enable a deeper engagement, as immersion in nature can aid wellbeing, down-regulating stress (Ulrich et al., 1991) and aiding the enhancement of our attention and cognitive abilities (Berto, 2014). Reflecting on my own integrative presencing practices, being in nature, engaging with natural cycles and rhythms, helps me attune more readily to the energetic flux I encounter both in my inner life and my presencing work. It reminds me that we are all fluid beings and unfolding becomings ... and not a fixed entities. We aren't nouns but multi-faceted processes involving countless verbs: sleeping, dreaming, feeling, breathing, sensing, moving, thinking, desiring, releasing, loving, playing...

## V. The need for play

I trained in theatre and community arts before I began to explore psychology; and embodied play has been a life-long passion of mine. I believe that play is central in human evolution and that notions of outgrowing play when we become adults are nonsense. In a world filled with uncertainty and complexity, play can enable skilful engagement with self and systems - or as Meadows (2002) put it, “We can't control systems or figure them out. But we can dance with them” (para 6). Play can bring greater fluidity to seemingly intractable, rigid, and unrelenting patterns and dynamics.

So, how do we understand play and what is its potential for cultivating presencing mastery? To draw out some principles I would like to bring an example from a field of practice adjacent to systems change and presencing. I have spent many years working in the arts and health sector in the UK, co-creating and co-facilitating creative programmes and community initiatives for behaviour change, to support greater health and wellbeing. I'm privileged to have initiated one of the longest-standing arts-based social prescribing programmes in existence in the England. The programme, Creative Alternatives, offers adults experiencing stress, depression, and anxiety a creative play space which is crafted by a team of experienced interdisciplinary artists who are encouraging participants to think of themselves as creatives, not patients, and to envision different ways of doing and being. Whilst Creative Alternatives is not structured as a presencing process, aspects of the community building efforts and the prototyping of new ideas and stories through creative expression resemble a U process. Making art involves dwelling in material relationships with the world. This material relationship is not reductionist and utilitarian (as may be the case in industrial production processes). Rather, it is intercorporeal and exploratory and experimental in nature, enabling the U curve, with particular emphasis on *letting be* and *letting come*. In Creative Alternatives mindfulness exercises frame and enhance the creative work cycle, and the arts materials stimulate the senses. There is an organic play with the materials that absorbs us, brings us into the present moment. We often enhance this experience by inviting participants to work with natural materials and found objects. And we invite them to trust the process, not placing overall emphasis on the final outcome. By creating an organic, playful context “people could experiment and discover different ways of being, thus beginning to release old patterns and make new choices in their daily lives” (Bockler, 2016, para 5). This feels vital for presencing practice. My sense is that well-crafted creative spaces, inviting more unbounded and free multi-sensory play and improvisation, would benefit presencing. If people were afforded more opportunity for free play, permitting them to *attune to what-is* (Gunnlaugson, 2020), I believe the capacity for sense-making and organic emergence would be enhanced.

I want to unpack a little more how and why this may be the case. Following years of experimentation and research, I perceive play as a universal adaptive process, enabling what Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) called *assimilation* and *accommodation* in a world constantly in flux. Whilst those two concepts are not homogenous in their meaning across disciplinary domains, Hanfstingl et al. (2021) assert that the following broad definition is widely accepted: “...assimilation means integrating environmental information into internal structures and schemas, while accommodation means

changing internal structures to meet environmental demands” (p. 331). Both assimilation and accommodation are essential for all life to maintain a healthy equilibrium and develop in response to evolving circumstances. Play enables a continuous adaptive re-patterning in service of evolution and flourishing.

Diving deeper into the psychological dynamics at play, pun intended, I want to consider how adaptive re-patterning may come about and then explore how this relates to presencing. It is well known that our motor skills, thinking, and perception, are subject to processes of automatisisation (Fitts, 1964; Deikman, 1966). This enables the fluency one associates with skill mastery: The more we practice a skill, the more it becomes a habit and the more it disappears from our ordinary awareness. In the end, we can execute the skill without paying much attention as the cognitive load is greatly reduced (Haith & Krakauer, 2018). Skill automaticity is vital for our daily functioning, and yet it also presents a risk, in that established habits narrow our perception and thinking, and those established habits can be hard to modify in the face of changing circumstances (Haith & Krakauer, 2018). We become stuck in our ways of perceiving, thinking, and doing. Creative activities in safe spaces, encouraging us to plunge with irreverence into playful experimentation, can, sometimes subtly, sometimes boldly, untether us from those habituated ways, returning us to the freshness of the present moment and inviting us to perceive the world and ourselves from unexpected angles. This I consider to be immensely useful in presencing practice, particularly when it comes to multi-modal play, enabling multi-sensory processing, and embodied forms of play which combine exterior movement, postural and gestural work with interior forms of attending and sense-making, e.g., via felt sense (Gendlin, 2003) and inter-bodily resonance. As Pomeroy and Herrmann (2023) elucidate, inter-bodily resonance offers us a strong avenue into the shared sensing of systems, helping us “to surface collective insight about hidden patterns and underlying dynamics of that social body” (p. 8). When we attune to intercorporeal resonances we become aware of the subtle patterns, shaping our relationships and interactions; and becoming aware we can begin to shift those patterns.

I recall a presencing exercise at a transpersonal symposium I attended, which commenced with the invitation to express our individual positions ... and to find common ground. The initial result felt chaotic, a cacophony of voices, vying for attention of the group. Gradually individual voices subsided and instead we began to move - first erratically as people were still acting as individuals not attuned to the social field. Then one, two, three of us paused and listened. We grouped together and witnessed one another, softly breathing, attuning, and gradually harmonising in

movement and sound. Once louder, the harmonic sound rippled through the space at an astounding speed and the energy in the entire conference room transformed. Common ground emerged through vocal harmony whilst bodies arranged in space were expressive of individual positions. There was a sense of coherence which guided subsequent reflections in heartfelt and refreshingly honest ways as people shared from a deeper place of embodied presence and care. This simple exercise opened us to what might be described as a gentle aperspectival awareness. “We move from having a perspective to being able to move into many perspectives to holding multiple perspectives simultaneously to seeing through presuppositions to awareness” (Hart, 2000, p. 163).

The attenuation of the ordinary self in play can prompt an opening to those deeper streams and sources that animate our lives. Gilligan (2018) refers to this opening as a loosening of reality filters. Gilligan (2012) proposes that creative flow engenders within us a generative trance state that opens the filters and “All the ordinary structures of identity that are usually fixed – time, embodiment, memory, logic, identity – become variable, free to generate new patterns and identities” (p.32). In the CCI and NFC programme we found such creative widening of the aperture of awareness to be an essential feature of holistic presencing praxis. It enabled a more conscious engagement with the archetypal dimensions of being:

We listen to the mycelium below ground, we follow the song lines and murmurings of our groups and communities. Where the deeper levels are not consciously engaged, processes and people tend to stagnate and/or certain prevailing archetypes find unconscious expression. For example, we find that the martyr archetype is dominant amongst many change facilitators, invoking a drive to self-sacrifice and to neglect self-care, and eventually causing burnout. We believe that archetypal levels are always engaged—unconsciously or consciously—and it is our responsibility to notice what is active, for good or bad, and what has been marginalised and needs to come to the fore in the service of our projects. (Bockler & Hector, 2022, p. 61)

A more playful approach in presencing practice could therefore be a game changer, enabling an opening to rationally uncharted territories, with the trust that the unknown holds potential for renewed vitality and increased coherence.

When we practise in these whole-hearted, embodied, and playful ways, we can get infused with a joie de vivre, an embodied vitality and enthusiasm that can be infectious and compelling. Opening to the full spectrum of our experience can lead to a sense of wonder, inspiration and awe. Vitality and joy can help us release into the unknown, the mystery of being ... and channelling what is emerging from the mystery can increase our sense of vitality and purpose. There is a kind of re-enchanting, affirmative feedback loop! (Bockler & Hector, 2022, p. 63)

## VI. Conclusion

In the above article I have explored how a triune of community, participation and play may benefit us in the cultivation of relational forms of presencing mastery. My proposition is, in essence, quite simple: That presencing mastery necessitates a kind of mandala of integrative, relational work, honouring our multi-faceted nature in playful and more conscious relationship with one another and the sources of being that animate all life. Such integrative work – finding expression as practice or training – may enable within us and between us more fluid and generative states of being that provide a more expansive and more kaleidoscopic appreciation of our world and its complexities, thereby broadening our insights and action potential in presencing work. To enable new forms of presencing mastery we need supportive communities of practice in which new possibilities of being can be fostered through indwelling at the bottom of the U. Such indwelling must prioritise embodiment, the cultivation of trust, and a deep sense of playful participation before we move to enacting new ideas and visions in the world. New possibilities of being require us to explore and deepen our sense of intercorporeality, and they need time to be cultivated and strengthened in supportive social fields that can offer us oases in the deserts of prevailing narratives and psychosocial patterns.

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