

Future positioning and its innovative potential within the Composition Work

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Introduction

Future positioning in temporal dialogues and its innovative potential within the practice of Composition Work

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Dialogues with future positions are likely to increase one's meaning of life as 'state', curiosity and reduce negative affects (Oles, Brygola, Sybinska, 2010). Dialogue between the future and present positions introduced in the practice of Composition Work allows taking a meta-position (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) which encompasses not only existing but also possible positions. This broad bandwidth of meta-position stimulates new meaning-bridges in the position repertoire extended to the future. The future and present I-positions are brought together in dialogue, which may act as a ground for discovering new promoter positions (Valsiner, 2000). The "future positioning" as a specific activity in Composition Work is introduced in two ways: a) by entering a favorable I-position in the future, b) by exploring and entering a possible but unfavorable I-position in the future. A dialogue between the future positions and the present positions is stimulated. Several examples of this kind of practice, placed in the context of the Dialogical Self Theory, will be presented.

Key words: future positions, temporal dialogues, Dialogical Self, Composition Work, possible positions

Summary

As a consultant, facilitator, coach, trainer I practiced the Composition Work approach with individuals and with larger groups (30, 50). People participate in these workshops, some are of three hours, others all day, because they want a better understanding of themselves. The journey to two future I positions, where you want to be and where you do not want to be is reported by the participants as a major experience that motivates a change in their lives starting now.

I report to you the complete content and method of these workshops.

3 Leading personal drives

For me the future is most important. I connect only to people I would like to play a role in my future. No reunites. Some people I meet once a year, some less. I integrate them in my present for a second.

My psychotherapeutic practice orients on bringing back the self steering power and actions in the clients. Sometime the blockades of the past in the present has to be removed to free the present to open up to to a future as a possibility to be filled in. My experience is that the power of a possible different future can be a strong drive for change.

In being a teacher, coach, consultant in business my leading intentions are: to create a now that gives more options for the future.



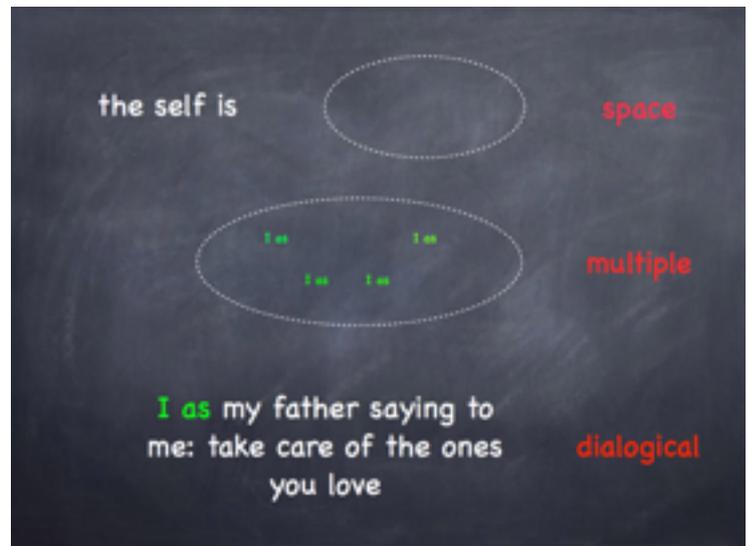
Break out of habits

In essence habits block development. They make us effective and efficient. We cannot do without because these are automatic patterns in thinking, feeling, and acting done before conscious control can interfere. Some can develop to block all normal life, others do not fit if a situation demands other responses.

Freeing from the ‚habit slavery‘ is the aim of psychotherapy, consulting, coaching. However habits are hard to change because their strength is the ingrained resistance to change. Resistance that arises as a response to the feeling of fear when one thinks about changing that habit, or make a slight change. The fear is ingrained at the same moment we let the act become a habit, when we at the same time verbalize the fearful consequences not acting, feeling or thinking according to that habit. „If not, then.....”

The Self, The Dialogical Self

The self as a concept developed in the long career of Hubert Hermans, in dialogues with many others, open the opportunity to strengthen people’s self steering, in the context of an individual’s life, work and his extended world. And that is the job, the profession I am in.



The future perspective as a change mover

Reflecting on oneself in the ‚now‘ from a ‚future perspective‘, a future I position influences the present composition of the Self. Many research support this statement. My focus now is not on reviewing research but to share with you experiences out of my practice.

Although in literature it sometimes seems that the Self is predominantly a mental construct, it is interwoven with feelings and actions. So the Self is a whole. The mental construction part is well developed. The feeling part too, thanks to the work of Agnieszka Konopka. To my knowledge the action part is not yet that strong developed although Hubert Hermans in the 70’s developed a behavior list to be used like the feeling list. This seed is still waiting to grow.

Future Positioning

The action of the SelfConfrontation method is in processing the confrontation with the outcome of the structural analysis. The reflecting, feeling and acting is in the process of the Composition work. The composition method is more direct dynamical integrating reflection, feeling and acting. The rise to new promotor I positions open up to other actions. In the Composition work the guide can easily switch a focus more on the emotions, or on the structure in the composition or on the composition process for instance when the emotions are not felt to stimulate the rise to the surface. The reflection on the consequences for the composition as a whole is a small step. Actions are consequences too. In my work I try to work with the whole human: self compositions, feelings and actions, not as a separate area but as integrated, connected; sometimes dominance change.

Although time is the fourth dimension in which the three dimensional space changes, time is in the three dimensional world of the Composition work as ‚I positions‘. „I positions from the past that influences me now“, „I positions in the now“ and „I positions out of the future connecting to the now“. In psychotherapy often the attention is on I positions of the past that block development and their influence must be lower to make further development possible. Therapy, the Composition work, all our meeting others, meeting our Self, happens in the now, the present. The now is the integrating moment, what happens, what is composed, what is felt is in the now. An action in the now is what makes a change.

In the Composition work one can work with several symbols. Agnieszka Konopka, Wim van Beers, Peter Zandvliet work with the metaphor of the Japanese Zen Garden.



I work with symbolics of written and spoken words, feelings expressed in movements, thinking and feeling expressed in actions.

Self Development a basic driver



I have practiced with many groups the past three years. What were their motives to jump into this Self Investigation?

■ A group of 20 successful business man in China. They are in their early 40's and realize they have it all they dreamed of in their 20's: money, house, wife, children. They can live in the US and in China. But what next? „What

Enriching the Self composition.

Guided with questions such as ‚What did you forget? ‚What was once important? Is it still somewhere?’ Sharing in groups of three is enriching made more so by asking for impressive song texts, texts out of poems, a long forgotten conversation, a line in a book, a saying of someone you still remember; also values presented by religions, in culture, by a company; forgotten dreams. Put these in and reorder when you want. Next step is enriching the composition with specific ‚I positions’ related to the specific motivation of the participants. Like ‚I as effective leader’, ‚I as having influence’, ‚I as being a respected coach’...

☀ The *futureing* Dialogues.

Promotor positions have specific effects. Hermans (2010) characterizes this position as an “innovation position”

1. It has an openness to the future. It has the potential to produce new specialised positions, open for creating or integrating new positions, or external and internal.
2. It has the capacity to integrate external positions and also to Integrate positive and negative positions (shadow positions). Include these also in the dialogues.
3. Reorganise the self: create new positions; re-order positions; involve negative emotions and positions.
4. Guards for the continuity of the self. Although it is directed on creating new organisations of the positions and emotions in the self it is open for discontinuity too. Someones ability to overcome crisis depends on the strength and the quality of the promotor position.’



Guiding to create future positions contributes to the development of promotor positions.

The instruction of the guide is:

„You move ahead in time, beyond the time limit you feel to have under control, seven years. You position yourself in a place you really want to be. You do your best with the people you want to be there. Now being in this position you look back to you now and say what you want to say to you now.’ Write this on a post-it.

You stay in the future, but now you position yourself in a place you do not want to be, but it might happen. What do you do? Who is present? What do you feel? From this position you look back in time to yourself now. What message you send yourself? Write where you are and what to say to yourself now on a post-it.

Now move back in time to you now. You heard the message from the position you want to be in and you heard the voice of the position you do not want to be in. Reflect on these messages and formulate what you want to do now and say to yourself. It is a now position, so write on a new post-it.

Place these positions in your composition. Reorder, make new, reformulate, until you have the feeling this is what it is now.

Stand up and review your whole self. Reflect. This is you as composed now. Where are the movement? Where are the changes coming up? What actions encourage the change you want.”

Seventeen Reports of participants

+ I realise I lose all my energy in solving conflicts with my parents and my ex-boyfriend, but I do not give any attention to my development. Now I realize that I have to go for my development. I have a future. My future is more in my centre.

+ I saw all is disconnected in my world in myself. I have to connect otherwise I cannot reach my projected future, but I do not know how.

+ I realise I only can imagine my future full with the activities of today. I feel sad. Is that enough for me?

+ The lesson I draw from my future travel is that I have to change my work-life balance. My child, husband and family, friends are more important.

+ I do not want to lose my family because I am hardly ever home. Always working. I sell my company and come home. (In the follow up coaching this solution was modified)

+ It can happen I get in the position I do not want to be in. But I will survive. I can.

+ I will change the priorities in my life now. I do not want to go on like this.

+ I realise I am well balanced and on track with myself

+ I never went that deep into my composition. I am astonished what is in me. I am on track. I go on. This is of much help. I now have a clearer direction for the future

Future Positioning

+ I now dare to decide to leave this city and study in another one. It is my future and I can always get in touch with my friends later on.

+ The absence of my father in my future upset me more than I thought it would do. He is more central than I thought. I like him to be there.

+ The threat for my life is overwhelming. I grab the luminescence of the future position I do want to be in with both hands and hold it close to my heart.

+ I have to talk a lot to stay connected with the people I care for, who care for me. I realize they might forget me.

+ I did not realize my complexity and different opposing powers in me. The option of the position I do not want to be in make me reorganise much in my life now. I have to do it now.

+ My profession, coaching, is much more important for me than I realized. I have to go on professionalizing in this.

+ This activity brings all the loose parts in me to a whole. Well I have to do a lot to make a whole, but I found new anchors for the future.

+ I will make the move tomorrow, this evening, I hesitated for stupid reasons.

+

☀ Three activities for Integrating with feelings and actions.

Feel your new Self:

They walked without talking, without interactions in the large hall feeling their enriched identity. They reported changes: more power in their movements, more head up, firmer steps, more direct looking around, observing (more open to the outside). Feeling energetic. Also feeling „this is out of reach, I am too old now, I am not in a position to act like this”.

Talk your new Self.

They talked walking around their enriched self composition while everybody listened. A young woman expressed new future positions for her as being in the position of one of the directors, or to adopt two orphan children, or being free of the cancer, being more connected to their feelings.`

Act your new Self

Each presented a meeting following week they to realise a change. With ‚drama play’ that situation was created on the spot. The participants practiced new behavior. Several trials for fine-tuning till they felt strong to do it in reality.

Future Positioning

☀ Write a letter.

They wrote themselves a letter on the spot that will encourage them later on to keep on track. The letters are in their handbags.

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