



# New Paths to Inclusion Network

## Theory U Tools: Social Presencing Theatre

*written by Dheera Petra Bauer*

Social Presencing Theatre (SPT) is part of the Theory U methodology. It is designed to support us in accessing a deeper level of knowledge: the wisdom of the heart and the body.

In the current time of disruptive change we notice that our old ways of relating and organizing society are not helpful when we try to meet the actual challenges on global and local levels.

Many people sense the necessity to create new ways of relating, interacting and creating. Rather than holding onto habits of judgment and fear there is a rising wish to meet and relate in a healthier and more creative way that is mutually supportive.

SPT offers a practical approach to open up a space in which we practice to be beneficial to one another. It is a way to experience that all human beings have unique and rich wisdom. It is a method to co-create situations in which this wisdom can emerge naturally and crystalize into insights, innovations and fresh Ideas.

Wisdom is innate to all people and groups and arises when we take the time to listen to each other in a deeper way.

Rather than focusing on problems the SPT practices invite us to communicate from a place of natural understanding (rather than mind activity). We pay less attention to what we think or know about a situation and more to what it physically feels like to BE in a situation.

This might sound a bit abstract and in fact – as SPT is an approach of experiencing rather than thinking – there are limits to the possibility of describing the method. So instead of trying to describe the potential use of SPT in the field of inclusion, I want to write about an opportunity to introduce and apply SPT in an inclusive setting: the 2015 Conference of the German speaking network on person-centered planning, where I introduced and worked with SPT in various settings (More information about the conference: [www.persoentliche-zukunftsplanung.eu](http://www.persoentliche-zukunftsplanung.eu)), which I will introduce in the text to come:

- 1. Plenary *Basic Embodiment exercise***
- 2. Workshop *Inclusion and Social Fields - Social Presencing Theatre***
  - 2.1 Round of Introductions
  - 2.2 The 20-Minute Dance
  - 2.3 The Village Dance
  - 2.4 Round of Feedback
- 3. Exchange Group *From stuck to movement***  
**Implementing Person-centered planning in organizations**
- 4. Closing remarks**

## **1. Plenary *Basic Embodiment exercise***

At the beginning of the conference I introduced in the plenary a basic embodiment exercise. The intention of this practice is to navigate the awareness and attention from outside (where am I, who is the other, what do I think about..?) to the inside (sensing the physical body). We did this by focusing our awareness on our breath. I invited the participants to feel the movements of the breathing body: breathing in & breathing out whilst also noticing the breaks in between.

All 300 participants in the plenary shifted their awareness from the outside (the room, the other people, the program, ...) to their own individual body. Sitting side by side, together, in silence feeling the breath floating in and out was quite easy. Every person has a sense of their body breathing, regardless of any (dis-)abilities, so everybody was included.

After some time a remarkable stillness arose in which a sense of connection was palpable.

Towards the end of the exercise I invited everybody to extend their awareness to the perception of the people sitting next to them, to turn sideways and look around with curiosity: to see who is there, aside or behind, without wanting anything else than noticing one another, just opening up and being interested in the neighbor. The exercise ended in greeting each other, saying hello at the beginning of the conference.

## **2. Workshop *Inclusion and Social Fields - Social Presencing Theatre***

The intention of this workshop was to explore if and how SPT can be supportive in co-creating an inclusive society. In SPT we are interested in Social Fields. A Social Field is the sense of a community, a group or a gathering. It is an underlying quality of ways of communicating and interacting within a specific context.

Every social field has its own characteristics. A social field may have tendencies of competition and exclusion; other social fields can be more open and inclusive. The guiding question for the workshop was if SPT could have an effect on co-creating a social field that can be supportive of inclusion. I stated this question at the beginning of the workshop and at the end I asked the participants to express what they had experienced and learned.

25 people attended this experiment. I deeply appreciated the curiosity and openness of a very diverse gathering of people. I offered and facilitated the following exercises in a constitutive order.

### **2.1 Round of Introductions**

One principle in Theory U is that before we start a meeting „every voice should be present in the space“. For this introduction round I had prepared a big poster on the wall, where all participants were invited to make an individual statement of introduction - in writing or painting. The guiding question for the introduction was:

What brought you here, to this workshop, what are you curious to find out?



After everyone had finished writing or drawing, every person approached the poster one by one and read out aloud what they had written or drawn. Here are some of the answers:

- ✓ I want to outwit my own barriers
- ✓ I want to sense and live what is really important to me
- ✓ I want to create and embody authentic images of inclusion
- ✓ Inclusion is to learn and work together. This is very important for society.
- ✓ I want to move instead of sitting
- ✓ I want to experience Inclusion without thinking
- ✓ I am curious to experience how SPT works? Does it guide me in a new way to ask my questions, to find answers - or away from that?
- ✓ The „new“ - how does it become visible, perceptible and possible to live it?
- ✓ I want to start of by living inclusion myself



## 2.2 The 20-Minute Dance

The 20-dance is an activity in which we pay attention to the feeling of the body, without thinking about it or judging it. We are not trying to fix, change or accomplish anything. It is an individual practice to feel and follow the needs of the body like relaxation, stretching turning, shaking, etc..



It is an invitation to attend to the body as it is in any given moment without following an agenda, opinion, judgment or thought. The task is to be aware (Where am I? What do I feel?) and follow the movements the body wants to make according to it's needs in that particular situation.

For more information have a look on the Presencing Website or watch the practice video with Arawana Hayashi:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trFFWRrhjnc>.

After the exercise participants mentioned feedback like:

- ✚ I feel extraordinarily relaxed
- ✚ I have a new experience of my body
- ✚ I loved the movement
- ✚ I feel refreshed

## 2.3 The Village Dance

While the first activity - the 20 - min dance - is more about an inner dialogue with oneself, the Village Dance focuses on encounter and interaction with the other group members. It is a step from one`s individual perception towards an exchange with others through movement. For this it helpful to use a common movement language, that is why the movements in this practice are specific:

- > movement through space like walking or rolling in a wheelchair,
- > turns,
- > changes of levels (laying, sitting, standing),
- > change of direction and/or speed.

Simplicity in the motion helps us to realize a situation and sense the developing Social Field. The practitioner focuses his/her awareness to:



- ✚ Where am I in the space?
- ✚ Where is the other?
- ✚ Do I choose to interact?
- ✚ How do I do that?
- ✚ Do I respond or set an impulse?

We relate to the others, to the spatial arrangement and notice an ever-changing quality of the Social Field.

## 2.4 Round of Feedback

For the finishing feedback of the 3 hours workshop I invited the group to choose and answer questions which I had written on another paper on the wall. Here are some of the answers

*What was special for you?*

- ✚ The exercises fit very well.
- ✚ Together we are strong.
- ✚ Together we can change everything.
- ✚ Creating a sense of Togetherness is important for all groups of human beings.

*Did you experience something new?*

- ✚ Many new encounters and movements

- + I have found new ways to be in the mode of exploration also on the body level and in the space
- + Practice more mindfulness with myself and towards others
- + New (body) experiences with myself

*Describe the difference between how you feel now in comparison to the beginning of the workshop!*

- + I feel more liberated
- + Jumping over the shadow - what a joy
- + This morning my brain was called for, now my body and heart
- + I am more relaxed - more body perception
- + I feel curious - sheltered, relaxed, tired

*Can this work be helpful for inclusion?*

- + Yes, it helps to stay in contact with oneself and to connect with others and to cope / deal with others
- + Yes, because of different ways to communicate.
- + No, too much openness is needed
- + Yes, if one wants to find new ways
- + No, if one is not open
- + Yes, sense and act instead of talk and think
- + Yes, without words and writing
- + Yes, because one is allowed to become engaged / involved with something new
- + Yes! Everyone can participate. With words or without - simply only through being
- + Yes, because experiencing what it means: to allow and bear something other/different

*Imagine you write a postcard to a friend with 2 sentences about this workshop. What would they be?*

- + The workshop got better and better. I liked it to gain new ideas.
- + I moved with strangers and got to know something about myself.
- + Strength lies in movement / encounter

### **3. Exchange Group “From stuck to movement / Implementing Person-centered planning in Organizations”**

The intention of the 3 hours exchange groups at the conference was to give space and time for the participants to meet on a personal level to exchange experiences and ideas.



Oliver Koenig and I facilitated this group of about 35 interested and diverse participants together. We chose to offer a Theory U - tool called Case Clinic (find a detailed description of the Tool in our Online Knowledge centre).

Within the case clinic we used a SPT exercise called **Stuck Dance**. Through the stuck exercise hidden aspects of a situation, of a case become visible. To realize these hidden aspects helps the casegiver to understand the situation more deeply and therefore find more appropriate ways of relating to it.

The Stuck Dance has 3 parts:

1. Creating a sculpture of current reality (Sculpture 1)
2. Movement,
3. Ending in a sculpture that embodies the emerging future (Sculpture 2).

1. The peers of the case giver create a body sculpture which is an expression of the current case reality.

2. Then they sense into the sculpture and let it move until

3. it ends in a finishing sculpture, which gives the case giver an embodied image of an emerging future.

The complexity of the case becomes visible in the sculptures and movements, while the case giver is watching the process. As he/she is attending to the Stuck Dance of the peers, new informations and insights about the observed situation can be generated.



For more information how this works you may want to watch an instruction video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvgVt-JBpO8>

#### 4. Closing remark



It was very enjoyable und touching to experiment with SPT in different formats in this diverse, inclusive conference.

The openness and curiosity of the participants was inspiring and also encouraging, when I think of the journey of co-creating New Paths to Inclusion which lies ahead of us.

The applied exercises are part of a bigger range of work of SPT. The descriptions provided here intend to give you a first idea of the approach. There are more tools within SPT which are applied in combination with other Theory U - tools in change processes in organizations, groups and teams. In each situation the duration and way of support for such a process is developed together with the clients, according to their needs.

If you have ideas or questions about the possibilities of applying Social Presencing Theatre (SPT) / Theory U in your work or organizational context, I am happy to hear from you. Please contact me via e-mail or phone.

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Zukunft gestalten / creating the future

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