



CROSSING OVER THE CULTURAL BOUNDARY TO SUCCESS A CASE STUDY

Hua Dai

Senior Lecturer/Learning advisor

Unitec

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The case and our initial support

- Sophie (Pseudonym) is an international student studying Nursing at Unitec, failed her first placement
- Initial Support: Conversational English & interpersonal communication skills through volunteering at the Unitec Marae & the local CAB

Failed 2nd
time,

Required to pass an
advanced English course;

Further support from LC
needed.

My observation:

she speaks with a faint voice that one needs to strain to hear her;

She behaves as if she is wrong. She is apologetic all the time with a smile on her face.

She studies hard and has passed the theoretical components of the assessments.

She did “all the right things” at the hospital; she did not understand why she failed her placement twice.

My observation and analysis

- When approached on campus by anyone, she would freeze, would lose all her communication skills at once. Speaking with a voice of a child, not holding eye contact.
- Would repeat the question and lower her head to think and mumble her (“right/correct”) reply as if it was a test.
- **Being “right”** is safe for her: it will protect her from being scolded/blamed (e.g. by her parents who favoured her younger brother), even though she has worked as a nurse in Beijing for over 10 years and successfully supported herself to come to NZ to study

My support focuses on her

- Developing self-belief that she is capable of achieving her goals in life;
- Supporting herself: her adult self comforting her younger self when frightened/approached to enable her to hold a conversation with her colleagues and preceptor at placement
- Practicing this with me in the appointments, and with anyone who approaches her on campus
- Using this technique regularly

What happened next presented to her a golden opportunity for the crossing to success

- One day, Sophia told me she would give up on her thousand-dollar pre-paid rent after she was forced to move out by an (verbally) abusive and difficult landlord
- I asked if she wanted her money back **regardless how difficult** the landlord might be
- She did.
- Encouraged her to find support at the CAB --another opportunity for her to practice her interpersonal skills when in need; a chance to learn about NZ culture and practice and find out, for herself, how things are done here

The outcome

- Accessed the free legal advice at the CAB
- Within one week, got her money back
- Her confidence and self-belief grew many folds instantly!

The benefit of that victory flows on

Her voice is switched up a notch and clearly audible.

She keeps eye contact with people

She passed her 3rd placement

She has successfully crossed her cultural boundary to return to nursing study now.

The theoretical frameworks I base my approach on

the constructive-developmental perspective that we construct our reality through meaning-making (Kegan 1982)

Psychosynthesis **Mind-Body-Feelings (MBF)** map (Palmer, 2010) that we are at the overlapping center of all three (MBF) at any time in life

Helen Palmer (2010). Psychosynthesis in the South Pacific: ontological and epistemological considerations of Aotearoa New Zealand [Psychosynthesis Monograph 10].

The Institute of Psychosynthesis

Robert Kegan (1982). The evolving self: problem and process in human development. Harvard University Press.