

Meeting Bahareh Amidi, Poetry Therapist

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***L3 Project conducted by Floriane MEYER, Julien BRUNO & Regis RADDE-
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After our *Poetry Therapy* participatory lecture, I decided to contact Mrs Bahareh Amidi, based in Abu Dabi to inquire about interview options. Her generous and prompt response, led the 3rd year undergraduate cohort to prepare a series of questions for Bahareh, which led to a Skype meeting last April. If this was a first for the students and I, our Poetry Therapist was a novice as well in this exercise! Inspiring and promising, isn't it? Below, in my streamlined rendering of the conversation we had on a sunny afternoon.

1. What have you studied at the university? Why and where?

I have a background in business, which runs in my blood. At school I met a Psychology & Philosophy Professor and became interested in the disciplines with a special focus on Counselling and Marriage... I ended up writing my thesis on Iranian-American teens, while the mystics also interested me. About 4 years ago, poetry

came to me as kind of a gift. (Bahareh has written 50 journals ever since). As I researched the field online, I came upon the [Institute for Poetic Medicine Studies](#) and found the purpose of my life.

2. How did you begin to write? And when?

The universe has magical ways. I was in the Bay Area in Palo Alto (California, USA) and wrote to the president of the Institute, John Fox and I became his student from writing an email to him. Since then, I have been going back and forth between Abu Dhabi and California. My cohort comprised of 11 people including: two nurses, two clergy member and 2 poets as different people are drawn to poetry therapy.

3. Do you have you any advice for someone who wants to begin writing poems?

It is so simple. Remember that anywhere in the world that you see a blank sheet of paper, just remember that this is an invitation to your heart and soul. Open your heart and let it pour on the paper. Do not lock yourself as when we are honest, so much pours out.

Bahareh has worked in prestigious boardroom where even senior business executives were shocked at the beauty of not locking and letting everything out.

4. What education is needed to become poetry therapist ?

Advanced studies in Educational Psychology & Counseling Psychology can represent an advantage although the 2-year program at the Institute for Poetic Medicine Studies grants certification.

5. Do poetry therapists need specific skills in poetry and literature ? What are the active ingredients of poetry therapy ? The words, the rhythm, the repetition (Mantra) ?

One of my classmates in the program is a Literature Teacher... She had an edge because she is SO organized! Nonetheless, you do not need any specific literary background. Our Polish classmate shared that he did not know how to write and was surprised at his first trial as we were... That is the magic!

In our circles, we mirror back lines; (*keep back exact lines through repetition*). We are here simply to hold (*the words said*). We read poems. We write our feelings, which open up our hearts, like the bandaid opening up the wound for the magic to happen. Hence he wound finds a place in the universe to exist

(See WRITING CIRCLE further down in this write-up for more details)

6. Do you think poetry therapy could help everyone in the world? Are the effects similar whether patients are listening to or writing poetry? Is it a therapy used only in some countries or is its practice global?

Poetry Therapy can help anyone it is brought to with a variety of benefits as it is read, produced and/or listened to.

Poetry has been around since existence as people begun to recite (oral tradition) as it is part of the rootedness to the universe. Our grandfathers would recite poems from Rumi and Ghavez for its medicinal purposes.

In [Champ of the Camp](#) (2013 film release) workers in Abu Dhabi make up songs while they are working as Black slaves use to in the Southern USA cotton fields.

7. What kind of troubles can be healed by poetry therapy ? How can poetry be used for healing ? What does the process look like ?

I can only speak from my own experience. As my mother has cortisone & Vaseline in her purse and offers it to anyone with an ailment, I have empty journals and pens to share as my own 'Windex solves all' commercial!

From cancer patients, transplant patients, children and victims of domestic violence, the power of poetry therapy can assist Team writing or co-writing is possible as well. I once became the notetaker of a woman undergoing human trafficking as she entrusted me to share her story. So yes, I go everywhere with empty journals.

8. Could you explain why chose the word "[tomorrow](#)" if you had to stop someone who wants to jump over a bridge? Did you some others words in your head too?

Until about the 100th verse, I did not know what it was going to be. And when it came, it came.... I was just as surprised as you!

9. You had the honor of reading one of your poems at a memorial for Nelson Mandela in Abu Dhabi. What do you think about his life and his fight? Do you think his “fight” is still current?

If I had to choose one highlight of my life (besides childbirth & marriage), this would be it.

A poem arrived, I took it to the Embassy, the next morning, they asked me if I could present it at the memorial!

It's been part of us, it is part of humanity and I believe it is all of our fight to cross the same rainbow.

Before we parted, Mrs Amidi offered us to share in a WRITING CIRCLE, which she introduced as follows:

This is a sacred circle.

Whatever is shared in this circle is for this circle only. We are here to hold each other's word, respect and honor. Sharing is not an obligation. Yet, sharing out loud later matters perhaps not within the circle but in reduced committee.

Bahareh read “When Someone Deeply Listens to You”, Poem by John Fox (<http://poeticmedicine.org/bio.johnfox.html>) and then invited us to write a poem in a few minutes on the theme ‘WhenSomeone Deeply Listens to You’ before reading it to the circle in which each member could mirror one of the line hence echoing away from judgment and reinforcing the voice of the writer.

Here is the original poem by John Fox, followed by by Mrs Amidi live write-up.

WHEN SOMEONE DEEPLY LISTENS TO YOU

When someone deeply listens to you

it is like holding out a dented cup

you've had since childhood

and watching it fill up with

cold, fresh water.

When it balances on top of the brim,

you are understood.

When it overflows and touches your skin,
you are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you,
the room where you stay
starts a new life
and the place where you wrote
your first poem
begins to glow in your mind's eye.
It is as if gold has been discovered!

When someone deeply listens to you,
your bare feet are on the earth
and a beloved land that seemed distant
is now at home within you. — John Fox

From John Fox's poem "When Someone Deeply Listens to You": Bahareh's Poem

When someone does not deeply listen to me...
I feel as a child lost in a tornado
I feel as a person who has lost their lantern in the cave
The presence of a labyrinth with no center

The reality of life when not connected
through the umbilical cord of life
But here in I breathe
I take a breath and ask for guidance and Light
I feel heard and guided through the universe by
Light

Thank you, Mrs Amidi for taking the time to speak with us and spreading your voice upon us.
We have remained inspired.

If you want to find out more about Bahareh Amidi, please visit her website :
<http://www.bahareh.com/>