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# Shrinking Territories

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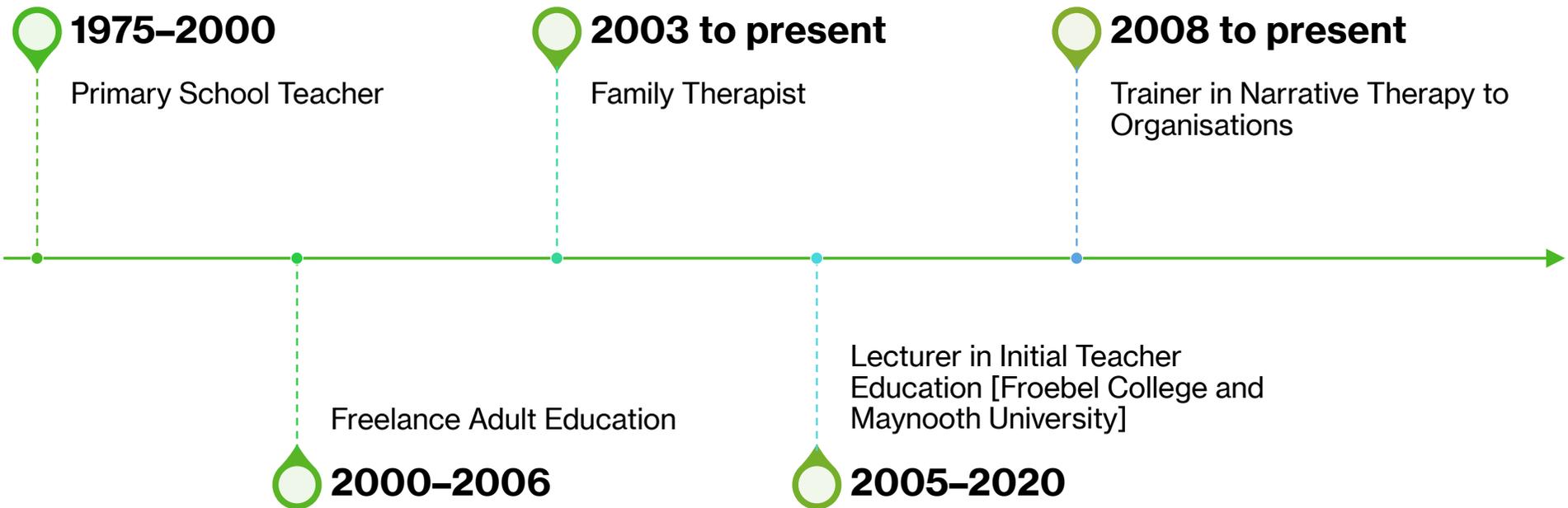
*A narrative approach to understanding the struggles of young people during lockdown*

*Presentation to CAMHS July 14<sup>th</sup> 2021*

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# Who am I?



# My hopes for this session.....

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To revise some of the ideas underpinning Narrative Therapy

To look at the experience of children and young people in Covid through a Narrative lens

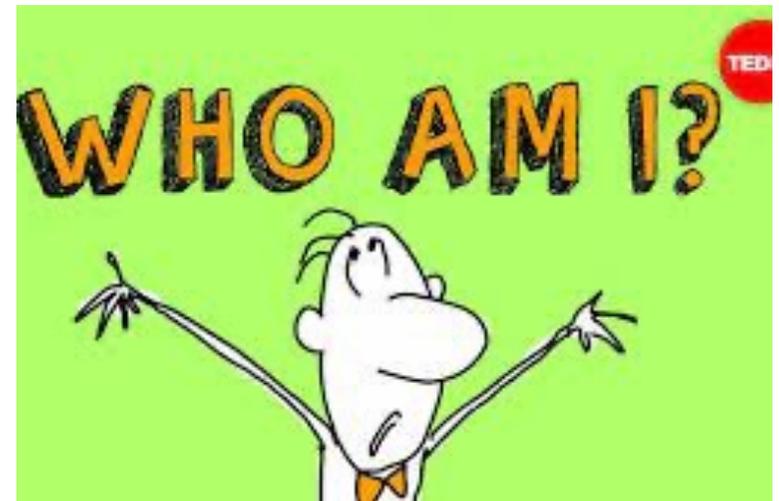
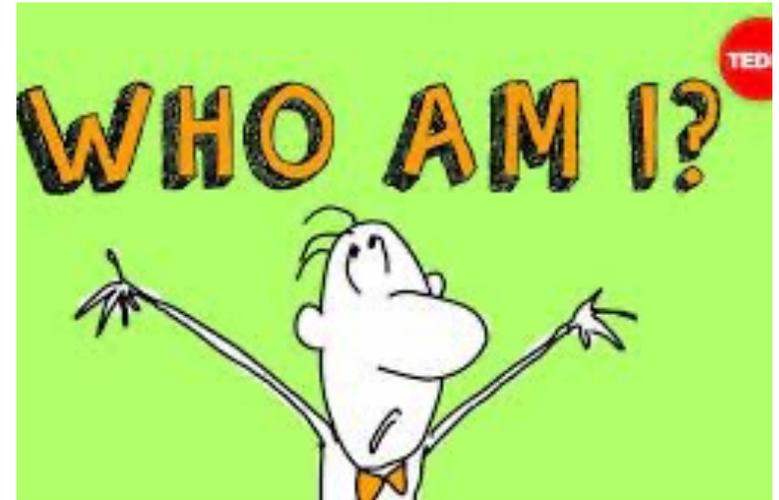
To explore our own experience during Covid through a structured interview.

To offers some possibilities for conversations with children and young people.

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# How many ways can I answer this question?

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# Seeing our answers as stories.....

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- Circle the story you are most enjoying!
- Underline those stories that are new!
- Mark with an X those stories that are known to your work colleagues!
- Place a star beside one story that you would like to develop more!

*Now write a line or two about what you noticed.*

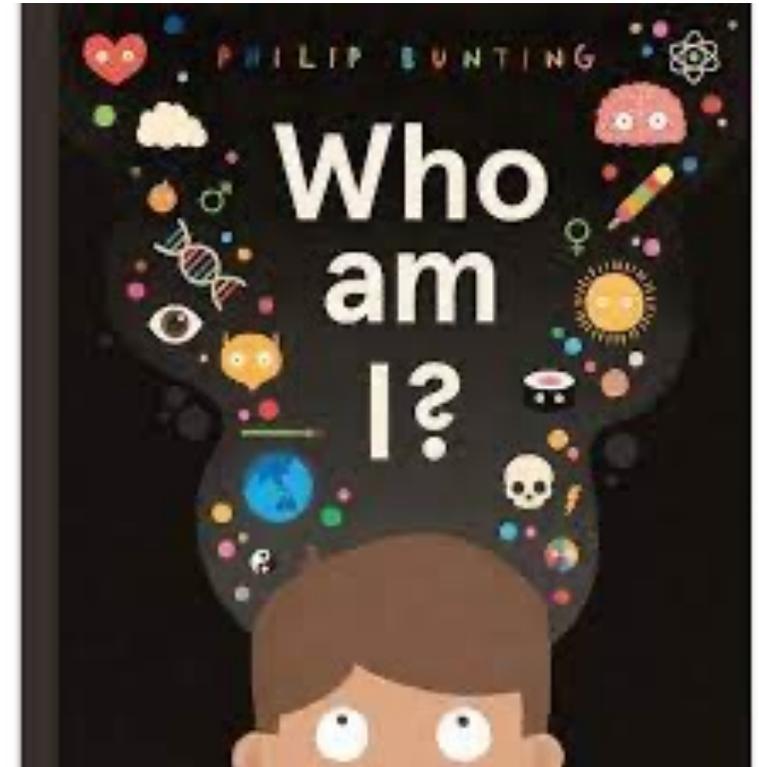


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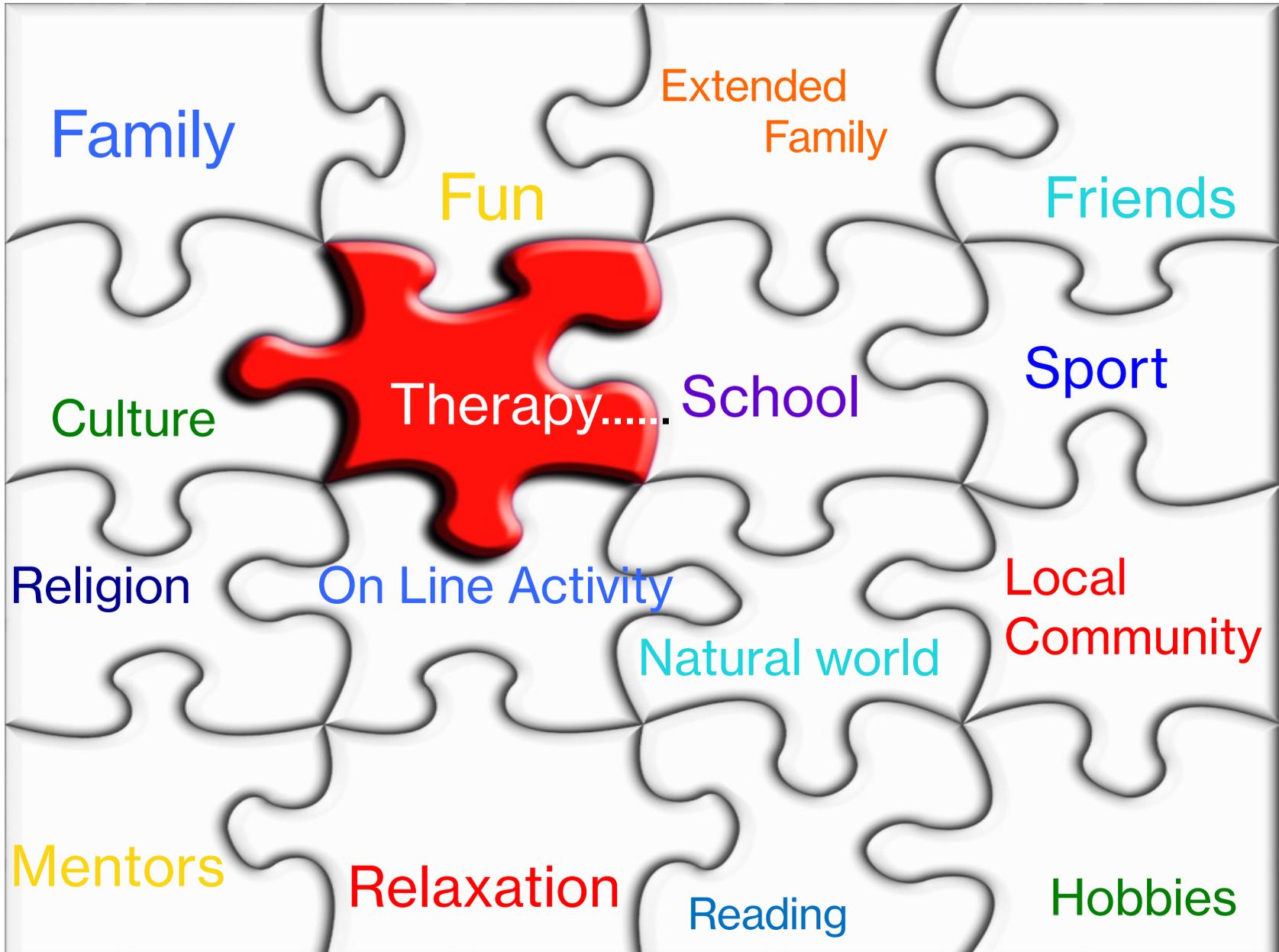
# ***Who is this young person? Which stories has he shared with me?***

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- What is the dominant story?
- Is there a problem saturated story?
- Are there alternative stories?
- What is his preferred story?
- Are there stories he cannot tell to others?
- Can you glimpse a story which he cannot yet see?



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“We are initiated into personhood through interactions with other persons, and we simultaneously develop and sustain personal identities through interactions with others who hold us in our identities.”

[Lindeman2014 preface pX]

“In order to stay popular, people have to tell you so”

[ten year old girl]

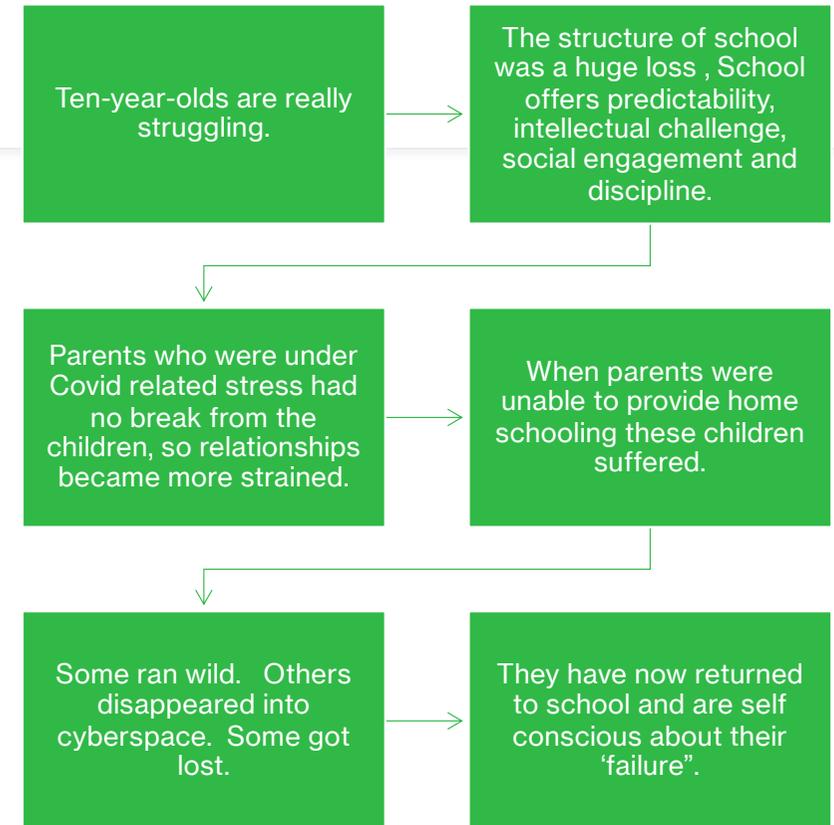
# During lockdown.....



- Many of the social contexts that support identity development and sustain identity development are lost. If young people resisted, they may have been charged with endangering their grandparents.
- Some of them lost relatives [perhaps the first major bereavement]. Some of them saw immediate family members ill. They may have been confronted with mortality for the first time.
- They had to manage time. The structure of the day and week was gone. Can I do home-schooling independently?
- Loneliness and boredom are big challenges.

*” Life was perfect up to Christmas”*

# What I observe in my own practice....





## The territory of life shrinks..... .....and we seek out islands of safety.

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- This metaphor comes from the writing of Michael White on Trauma.
- Covid and Lockdown were a challenge for most but a trauma for some.
- White claims that in response to Trauma persons always take actions to stay connected to what is precious to them. These actions may take place at the time of the trauma or later.
- He uses the metaphor ‘Islands of Safety’ to refer to those places we go to and those actions we take to stay connected to what we are missing or longing for.



## Islands of safety

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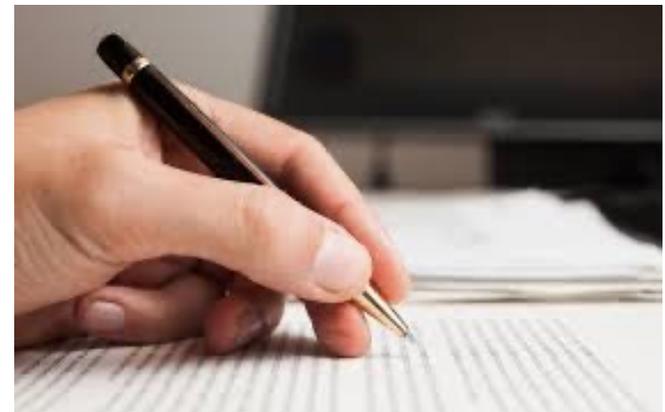
- Structured Interview in pairs
- 15 minutes each way
- Stick to these questions even if they seem strange.
- Don't revert to your own skills
- This is a contrived exercise for training purposes.
- You will get a message when the first 15 mins. are up

# Time to write.....

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- During the pandemic and the various lockdowns, did you at any time or in any way experience a ‘loss of sense of self’ or a sense that the “territory of life was shrinking”?
- How did it impact on your energy? your body? your sleep? your mood? your relationships with others?
- What did you experience as being lost to you?
- Were there any islands of safety that provided a refuge from this loss, things you chose to do, people you spoke to, places you walked etc.
- Did this take a lot of effort?



- To what extent did this involve others?
- Who might appreciate the efforts you went to?
- What did you come to value on these islands of safety?
- To what extent have you recovered a sense of self?
- How is that evolving?



# What was useful about these questions?

- Narrative Therapy attends to the problem but also unearths alternative stories.
- In Narrative Therapy we know that people have skills and knowledge that they can draw on to address the challenges of life.
- Narrative Therapy seeks to understand what is precious to the person or what they **value**.
- Complaints protests and tears always speak to something of **value** which is “absent but implicit”
- These **values** have a social and relational history.

# How do we go forward.....



Where does all this  
take you?





## References:

- Lindeman, H [2014] *Holding and Letting Go: The Social Practice of Personal Identities*. Oxford University Press
- White, M. and Epston, D. [1990] *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* Norton
- White, M, [2004] Working with people who are suffering the consequences of multiple trauma - a narrative perspective  
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