



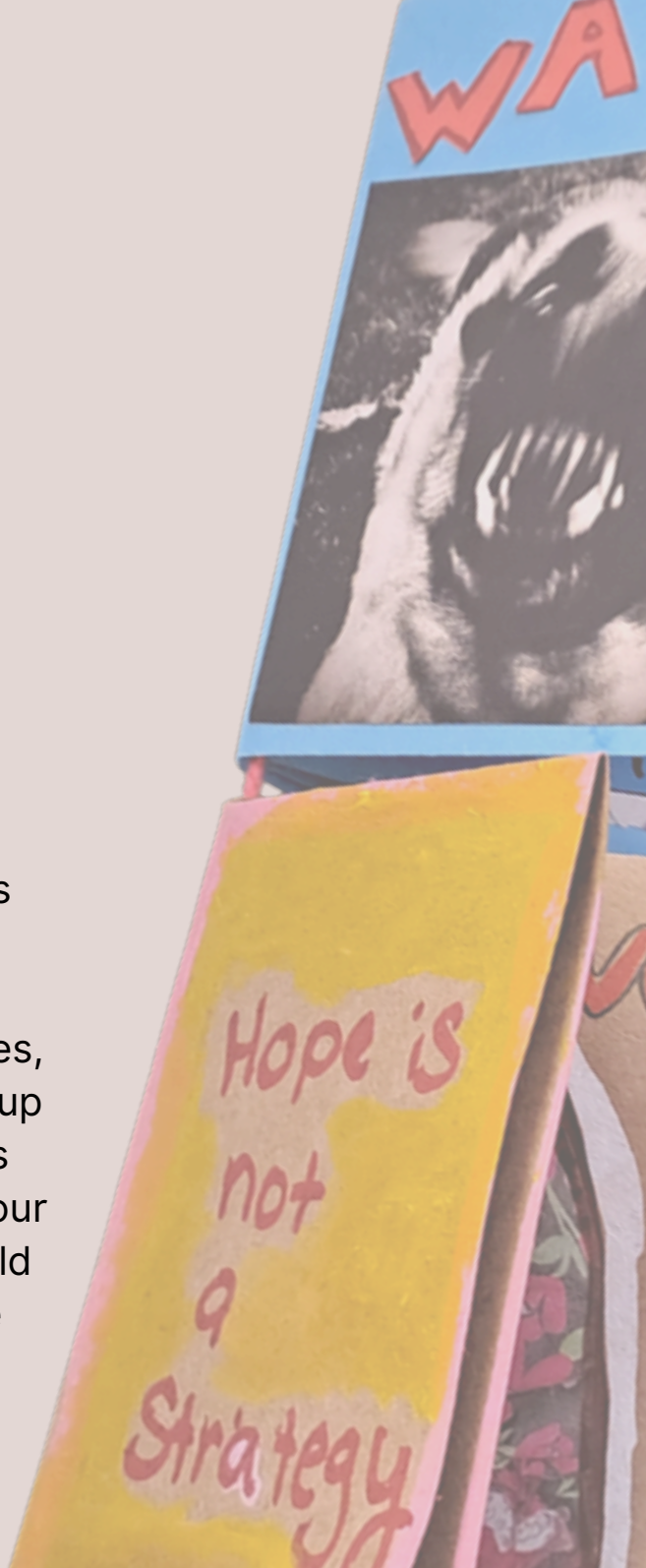
The DEFY
Collective
Depth Education for Youth

Shifting Edges: Exploring Our Capacity to Open and Hold Space as Educators

Zine II
Published
January
2026

"As cracks emerge, as monsters sprout through flat surfaces and in sterilized places, as the enemy creeps up within, so to speak, as the wilds show up in our living rooms, we would need something more than chasing them away"

Bayo Akomolafe



Zine Map

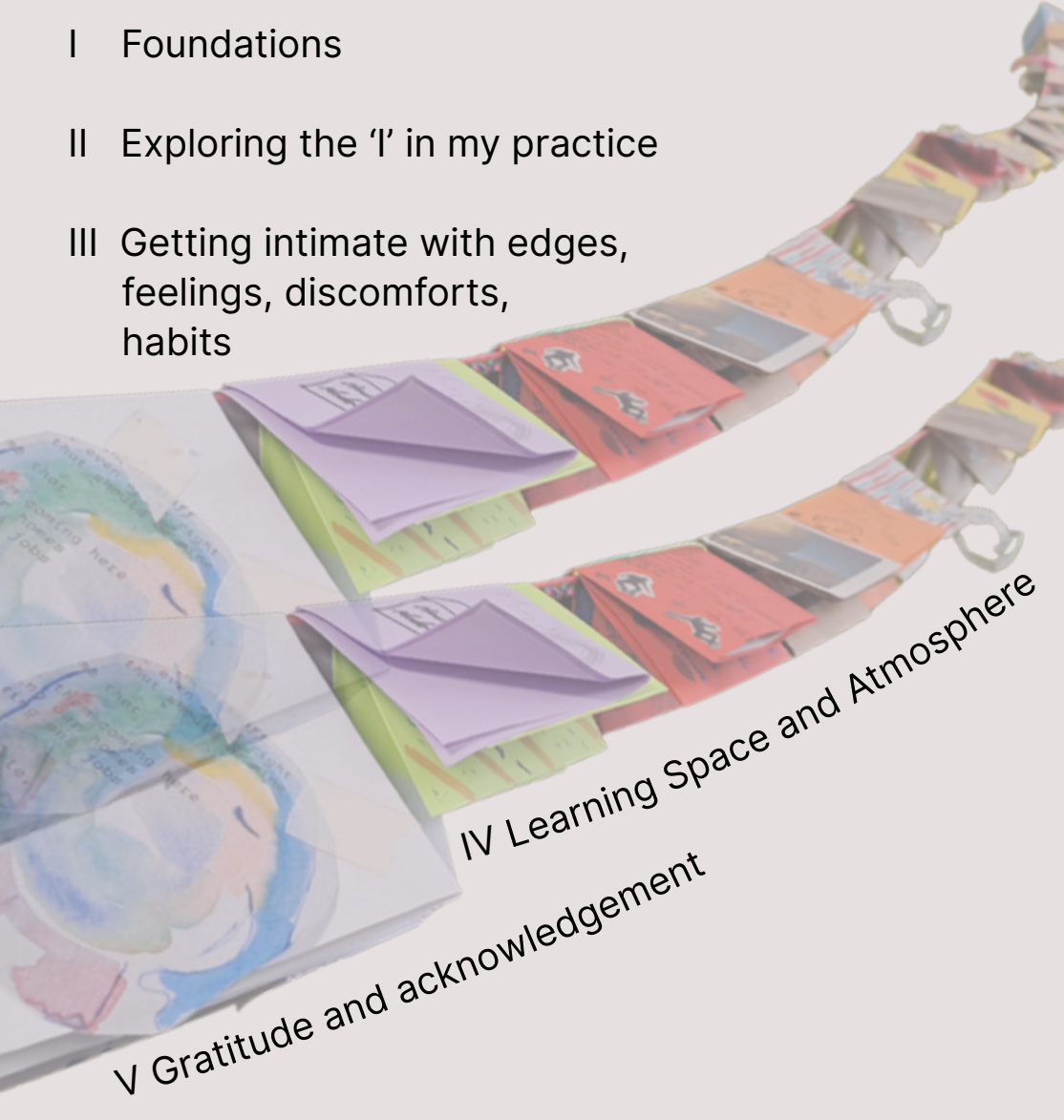
I Foundations

II Exploring the 'I' in my practice

III Getting intimate with edges,
feelings, discomforts,
habits

IV Learning Space and Atmosphere

V Gratitude and acknowledgement



Collaborative inquiry – we understand DEFY to be a collaborative inquiry with fellow educators. Material generated in the spaces is considered the ‘foundational discourse’ alongside a collectively held sense of its limitations and the need to always go further and deeper in terms of understanding. **Entanglement, complicity** – ‘difficult knowledge’ is central to this project. It is knowledge that is difficult both for the painful and traumatic material of the actual content but also because it ‘makes demands’ on us, asking us to consider our own positionalities, our implications in and entanglement with structural violence and injustices. We are ready for when this even when it might disrupt our self-image and sense of who we are. **Self-focus/ reflexivity** - instead of asking “What can I do?” and “How can I support?”, we ask, “Who am I?” and “How am I connected to this?”. We see self-focus not as an indulgence, but as a way to explore difficult knowledge.

Process-informed – we see this as a central habit to want to “know ourselves” and “know others” and how this a way to “know ourselves” and “know others” in systems of normalisation. We see this as a way to expand our ability to “know ourselves” and “know others” with different kinds of “knowing” – image, metaphor, different spoken languages. **Relationality** – while this project brings our attention inward, we remain attentive to its purpose: to grow capacity to feel, to dig deeper, to relate wider, for and with others. **Comfort / stretch** – we recognise that part of this work is about exploring relationship with (dis)comfort, with dissonance, disillusionment and more, and as it shows up in us - getting more familiar with the worlds inside of ourselves. **Disclosure and consent** – we do not assume that all are ready to show up to a process that might be irritating and disruptive and so, as we go, we will find ways to convey what is being asked so that each has the chance to consent (or not) and take responsibility. **Collaborative inquiry** – we understand DEFY to be a collaborative inquiry with fellow educators. Material generated in the spaces is considered the ‘foundational discourse’ alongside a collectively held sense of its limitations and the need to always go further and deeper in terms of understanding. **Entanglement, complicity** – ‘difficult knowledge’ is centra

Chapter I

Foundations

Dear reader,

This zine carries texts that emerged through *Shifting Edges*, an offering for educators exploring difficult-knowledge and discomfort. If we had to describe it, the closest words might be reflective, exploratory and tentative.

The pages hold some of the elements that arose for participants through the journey as well as reflections from ourselves, the team of 4 who curated the space.

Taken together, they give a sense of what happens when we pay attention to the seemingly insignificant - small vibrations within oneself or in group space - and how self-inquiry can lead to contact with entanglements as well as new forms of knowing and responsibility.

We imagine that this zine might resource those of you already working at the slippery intersection of difficult-knowledge and discomfort. We also hope it may encourage those of you who are curious about such a place. The zine may be challenging for those expecting linear educational guidelines and for those who are newer to embodied approaches. We welcome you all!

The pages are quite tender. Take your time, dip in and out, and go gently. When going through, consider how you are connecting - you may even find yourself wanting to disrupt all of this!

Thanks for reading,

Charlotte Bishop, Miriam Streit, Sive Bresnihan, Maja Dominič
DEFY/Shifting Edges

DEFY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(these are principles that we paid attention to each step of the process. Notice how and where they emerge in this zine)

Collaborative inquiry – we understand DEFY/Shifting Edges to be a collaborative inquiry with fellow educators. Material generated in the spaces is considered the ‘foundational discourse’ [1] alongside a collectively held sense of its limitations and the need to always go further and deeper in terms of understanding.

Entanglement, complicity – ‘difficult knowledge’ [2] is central to this project. It is knowledge that is difficult both for the painful and traumatic material of the actual content and because it ‘makes demands’ [3] on us, asking us to consider our own positionalities, our implications in and entanglement with structural violence and injustices. We are ready for this even when it might disrupt our self-image and sense of who we are.

Self-focus/ reflexivity - instead of asking “What can I do?” and “How can I support?”, we ask, “Who am I?” and “How am I connected to all of this”? [4] We understand self-focus not as an indulgence, but as necessary for contact with difficult-knowledge.

Process-informed – we recognise a/our tendency and cultural habit to want to present solutions and/or “prescribe universal responses” [5] and how this allows us to bypass consideration of our own entanglement in systems of harm, leaving our comforts intact.

Language – we are mindful of how language has the capacity to suppress as well as expand our ability to explore differently and commit to experimenting with different kinds of expression through DEFY including drawing, image, metaphor, different spoken languages.

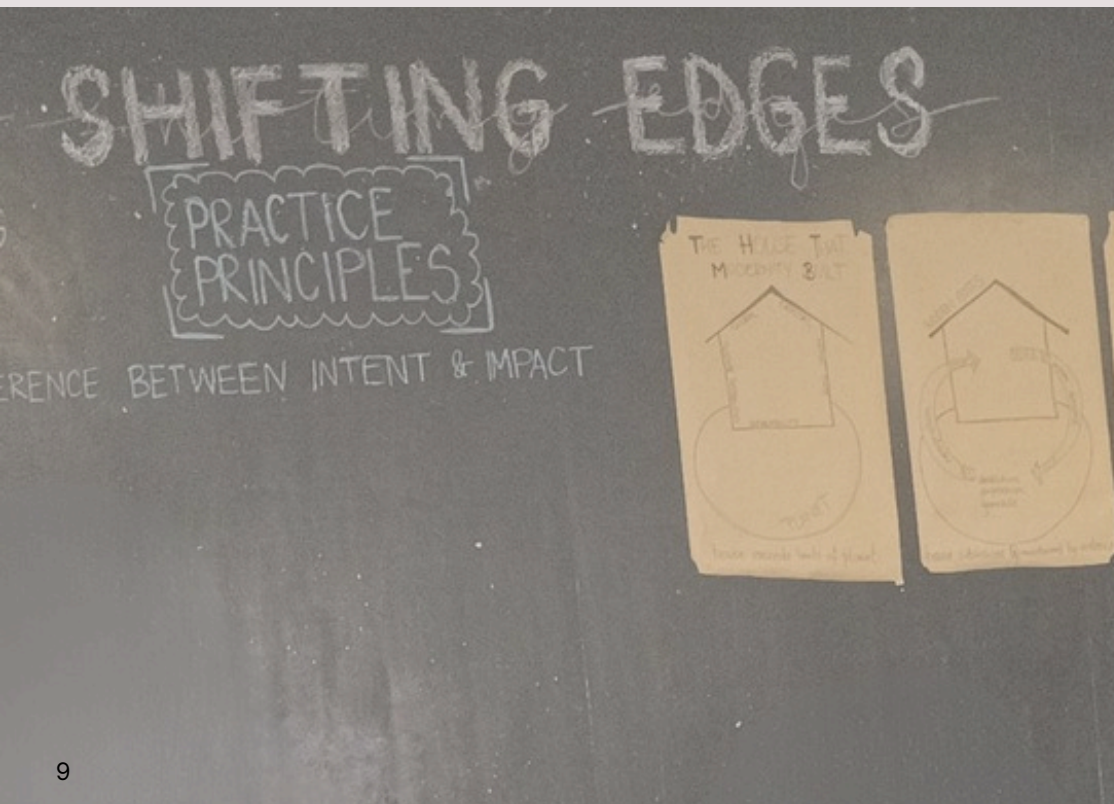
Relationality – while this project brings our attention inward, we remain attentive to its purpose: to grow capacity to feel, to dig deeper, to relate wider, for and with others [6].

Comfort / stretch – we recognise that part of this work is about exploring relationship with (dis)comfort, with dissonance, disillusionment and more, and as it shows up in us - getting more familiar with the worlds inside of ourselves.

Disclosure and consent – we do not assume that all are ready to show up to a process that might be irritating and disruptive and so, as we go, we will find ways to convey what is being asked so that each has the chance to consent (or not) and take responsibility [7].

Engagement with Shifting Edges does not just reveal cracks, it softens the edges between roles, redefines “content” as connection, and opens up spaces for becoming. It is, at its heart, an invitation to reflect more deeply on who we are as educators, and who we might yet become.

by Joanne and Mary



Chapter II

Exploring
the 'I' in my
practice



Every encounter in my
life has had an effect
on me humans, natural
world, animals, even
technology

How can I define
myself so simply?
It's not possible

**“And in all of this emotional terrain, I
(and maybe other learners too) feel
overwhelmed”**

by Mags

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) requires more than intellectual engagement: it demands a reflection on positions, values, and assumptions, in a continuous and reflexive process of self-examination and self-evaluation as new knowledge and experiences reshape their [learners] understanding of the world and themselves. In this space, learning became transformative, not just informative. But transformation comes at a cost and it is exhausting.

Knowledge in GCE is not neutral as it is intertwined with feeling. Every fact carries a weight, every issue a moral implication. The process of questioning is unrelenting, peeling back layers of inherited beliefs, cultural norms, and systemic structures. Identity, too, is not fixed. It is continuously constructed and revised, shaped by encounters with injustice, solidarity, and complexity.



This kind of learning asks learners to sit with discomfort, resist the urge for easy answers and instead dwell in ambiguity. It asks them to confront contradictions: between what they know and what they feel, between what they believe and what they see. It asks for empathy, not as a passive sentiment, but as an active, courageous engagement with the lives and struggles of others. It asks for compassion, not as charity, but as a recognition of shared humanity and mutual responsibility.

And in all of this emotional terrain, I (and maybe other learners too) feel overwhelmed. The weight of global injustice, the challenge of personal accountability and implicatedness, the fear of not knowing enough or doing enough can lead to fatigue, even paralysis.

Arguably it is in this space that the most meaningful learning occurs. When learners are invited not just to understand the world, but to feel it, question it, and imagine it otherwise.

But it can also be paralyzing and stagnant. Sitting on the edge may feel like the only safe place to be.



25 DAY
08 MONTH
YEAR 25

THOUGHTS

AND

TO ACT COLLECTIVELY

WORK STARTING EDGES

- PRACTICE
- WORK
- VALUES
- MEANING
- FEELING

I AM LARGE

I CONTAIN

SHIPPING EDGES

MIND IS STILL RESTLESS

HANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY

FROM THE ABILITY TO SEE

COMMUNITY IS A PRODUCT OF WORK AND STRUGGLE, IT IS INHERENTLY UNSTABLE, CONFLICTUAL, IT HAS TO CONSTANTLY RE-EVALUATE...
- CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY



DISCOMFORT - IN

IT LIVES OUT OF THE HEART BUT INSIDE THE BODY AND TRAVELS TO THE

CONSTANT EXPANSION OF BE CONSTRICTED EYE

DIALOGUE

TO ENGAGE IN

WALT WHITMAN SONG TO MISELF

COLLECTIVE

REFRAME IMAGINE

THE RADICAL COMMITTED TO HUMAN LIBERATION DOES NOT BECOME THE PRISONER OF

IS ONE OF THE SIMPLEST WAY

WE CAN BEGIN

PAULO FREIRE

THE CIRCLE OF CARE

THE BARRIERS TO CROSS BARRIERS TO CROSS BARRIERS TO CROSS BARRIERS
MAY NOT BE ERASED BY RACE, GENDER, CLASS, PROFESSIONAL STANDING AND A HOST OF OTHER DIFFERENCES

NO TEACHERS SCHOLARS AND CRITICAL THINKERS

WITH MORAL CONVICTION

by Aniz

ONE MEANING CERTAINTY

A FIRM CONVICTION THAT SOMETHING IS THE CASE

ANOTHER MEANING

A FACT THAT IS DEFINITELY TRUE

DEFINITIONS ARE VITAL STARTING POINTS FOR THE IMAGINATION.

BUT

AND

IS THIS LIBERATION FROM IT?

IT MARKS OUR STARTING AND LETS US KNOW WHERE WE WANT TO END UP

THE MAP OF A SCATTERED BRAIN & IDEAS

IS A CIRCLE OF CERTAINTY

**“I swing between,
‘maybe it's not worthwhile’
and ‘maybe it's vital’”**

Sive - a Thursday conversation with DEFY


And I do swing between, ‘maybe it's not worthwhile’ and ‘maybe it's vital’. And where I land most often is that ‘maybe it's vital’. If I look around at educational spaces and the world more generally I feel the lack of space for, like, just taking a moment, actually feeling, having a breath with others, being in relationship *with*. It's like the community you spoke about, Miriam, it's scarce even in circles where people are trying to make change - and by community I'd mean a quality of connection, space for everybody to feel like they belong (and within that, difference), ways to discuss things that need to be expressed and talked about.

“sceitimíní áthas”

I’m struck by the tensions between how I teach and how I want to be in the world, yet through the vulnerability of others and my own openness, I found renewed clarity and a sense of “sceitimíní áthas” - joyful excitement about future possibility.

by Joanne






“I could dive into the freezing water of the unknown with the learners.”

by Sadhbh

What I realised after our conversation and all that opened in me, was that in my rush to upskill, to take in all the new knowledge and try to become a so called expert in Development Education, I was forgetting what had brought me to this place in my life and work.

The reason I loved the weekly Shifting Edges meditation practices was because they reminded me of the Montessori principle of the prepared environment - both physical and non-physical. I started to think about the other Montessori principles and whether I had been using them in my new working space.



Had I been creating that initial spark for the learners to ignite their curiosity? Had I been letting them lead the exploration by waiting, listening and watching, all of which are so critical to Montessori's principle of observation?

Had I been giving the learners independence and freedom (within limits) by letting them work at their own pace, in groups allowing the learning to evolve organically?

Had I been going back to that age old principle of concrete to abstract, facilitating hands-on active learning?

This is what I realised I needed to do to guide myself when I was feeling lost. By grounding myself in these principles I could dive into the freezing water of the unknown with the learners.

Montessori Principles

Respect

Play
is
Work

Hands-
On-
Learning

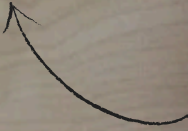
Freedom
Within
Limits

Observation

Independence

Prepared
Environment

structure that
allows organic
learning



Read the room- how
am I affecting the
learning
environment?



Allow them to
make mistakes &
learn from them



Meditation &
creating a
safe space



"It's about being vulnerable with myself and with others."

Tonya and Charlotte in conversation

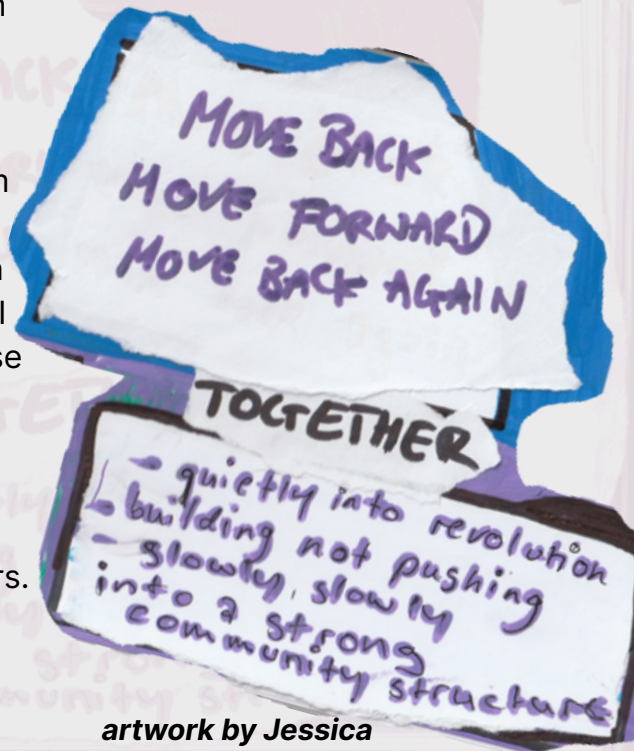
T: My background is white American, hardworking, following the steps, liking the rules...but these rules and these steps can be harmful and oppressive.

I've come a long way in my unlearning. There's always a tension though between holding on to that certainty of rules and steps (i.e. my background) and...knowing that certainty is not helpful.

C: Its hard though isn't it- like how much do you let go of certainty? Especially if you've only known to move forward, to act with certainty. It's easy to feel paralysed?

T: Part of my unlearning-in general-has been that realisation of the forced separation between mind and body, knowing that I'm far too much in my head. When I've made a decision (from a body awareness), I feel an overwhelming sense of calmness in my whole body.

It's about being vulnerable with myself and with others. Not pretending that I've everything sorted.



artwork by Jessica

Shifting Edges, a poem

by Mags

where are these edges, the boundaries,
is GCE relevant to all of my life
the personal and professional
the extraordinary and everyday
[and if so when do I get a break, holiday]

where do I find the boundaries, the edges,
define them, explore them, expand them,
explode them

if I want to
if I have the energy
if I have the enthusiasm
exploration, expansion, explosion
if I can....
[or maybe exhaustion?]

an edge, a cliff face, a border,
constant monitoring and vigilance
watching, waiting, wondering
a gap, a fall, an idea, a thought
a break, a breakthrough, a breakdown
[or just a break?]

fear of naming
fear of claiming
fear of being seen as too much
too political
too emotional
too radical

fear of stepping
beyond the comfort zone
beyond the sanctioned script

but fear is also a teacher
highlights the edges
the places we hesitate
the truths we resist
the change we fear

in the liminal, the layered, the learning
where every moment is a teachable one
and every silence begs reflection
on the call, the contradiction, the constant
without losing myself?
[can I say no? not today]

edges blur
between activism and admin
between passion and pressure
between me and mission

I hold questions
I hold hope
I hold on

I sit
on the edge
of knowing
and not knowing
and what is
and what might be.



*photo of gorse in
Wicklow by Miriam*

“I think I'm still learning the ‘that’s okay’ part. It doesn't sit easy with me.”

Maja and Sive- a Thursday conversation with DEFY

M: For me, a big one is (what is the word here?) the allowance of how much of myself can be ‘in’ an education space or better, how much of myself can I put in, show, express. Playing with the boundary of how much of me as a person? And how much of me as part of the project team can I put inside this project space? And realising that this can shift rapidly based on the week or the day and that that's also okay. I think I'm still learning the ‘that’s okay’ part. It doesn't sit easy with me. At least it hasn't throughout the project.

S: Hmmmm...DEFY invites in the ‘self’, right? And because it does, it carries the imprints of the people who are involved in it. In turn, those imprints mirror back to us who we are, our preoccupations and positionings in an unequal system, and then that same question pops up again - are we able to make space to look at those things in a new way?

M: It comes back to personal responsibility, to our question(s) of how are we relating to the spaces, and to the people, and to the topics, and to the difficult knowledge that we are part of, or don't want to be part of, but kind of still are.



Dear reader...

An invitation to take a pause, to reflect a while as you move through. The end of a chapter is perhaps a good time to do just that.

A gathering of threads too- to notice what has been quietly consistent across the contributions above.

As you pause you might recall the guiding principles offered earlier: instead of asking “What can I do?” or “How can I support?”, we ask, “Who am I?” and “How am I connected to all of this?”

Here, self-focus is not framed as indulgence, but as a necessary condition for staying in contact with difficult-knowledge.



The background features several vertical black lines of varying thicknesses on the left side. A large, white, brushstroke-like shape sweeps across the top and middle of the page, partially obscuring the text.

Chapter III

Getting intimate with
edges, feelings,
discomforts, habits

Over these months I have been exploring, stretching and expanding beyond my edges, getting closer to and more familiar with my self and becoming more embodied. I am learning to build stamina, patience and new approaches for the elephants in the room

by Helen



"Emotimap" - "an emotional memory" - by Veronika

"It's more comfortable- the denial"

Charlotte, Miriam and Sive- a Thursday conversation with DEFY

C: Can you actually say that someone's fully aware of something if they're actually not responding to it? You might know something- cognitively, in theory- but it's that thing that I suppose is often talked about, which is that more people knowing about the climate crisis, for example, hasn't actually meant anything. There hasn't been any... you know...big transformation or response. So this knowledge system that we've been working with doesn't translate to actual real knowing.

Funny.
I suppose this is what DEFY is; it's an experiment in different ways in.

M: It's more comfortable- the denial- and then you get back to DEFY. DEFY invites in the discomfort, being able to hold discomfort, but actually, when you're confronted with it, it's more comfortable to go with the denial because it's your safe space, it's your comfort, you can stay, you don't have to change anything. And if you would truly accept the discomfort of knowing and accepting collapse and the reality of collapse, then you would have to...

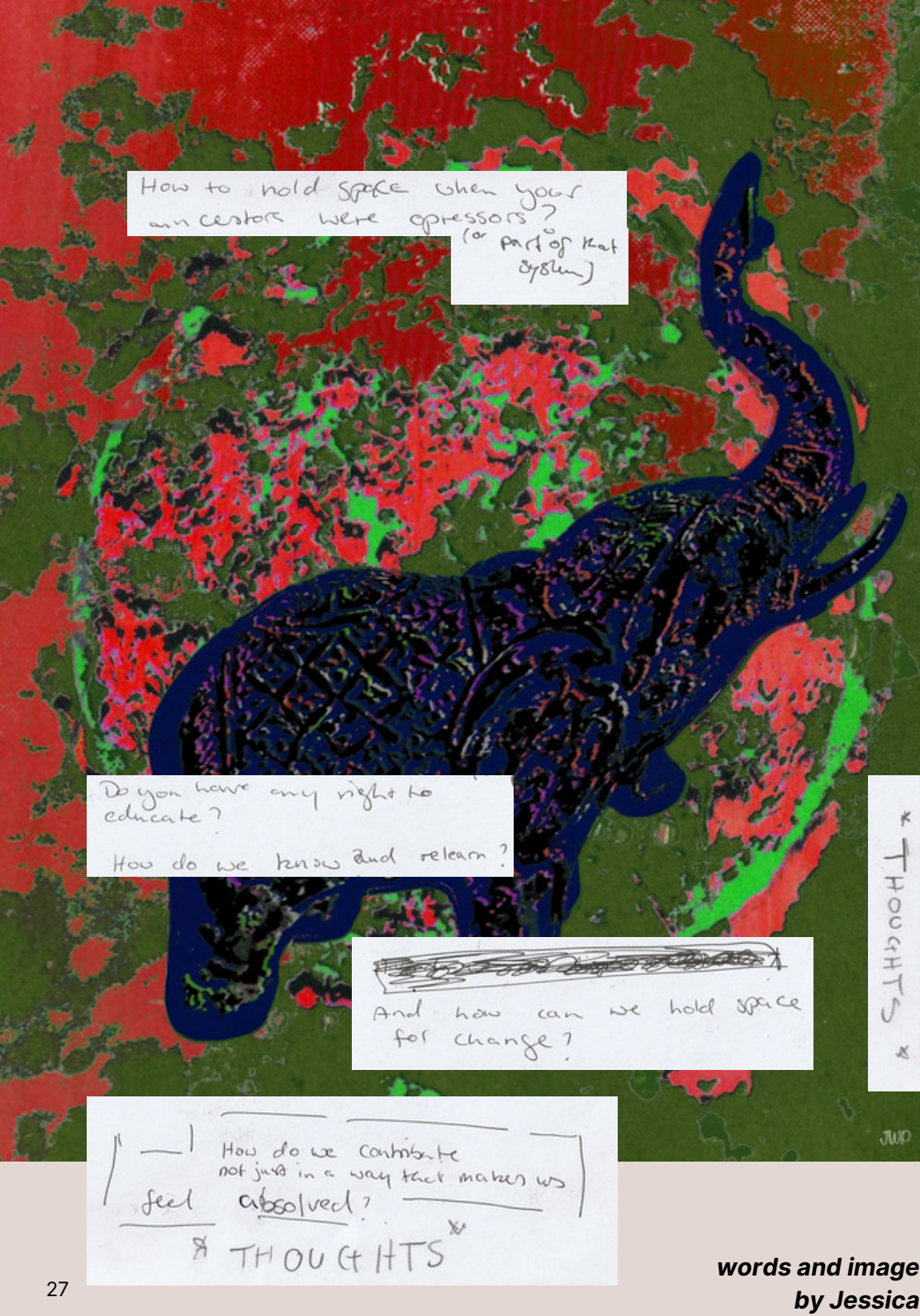
S: ...change something or do something about it.



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artwork by
Jessica



How to hold space when your
ancestors were oppressors?
(or part of that
system)

Do you have any right to
educate?

How do we know and relearn?

~~How do we know and relearn?~~
And how can we hold space
for change?

How do we contribute
not just in a way that makes us
feel absolved?

* THOUGHTS *

* THOUGHTS *

JWP



artwork by Jessica

“How do we not hurt ourselves as we break down ourselves?”

by Fionnoula

...the house is us. we are so big- taking up so many different parts and ideas. I remember the discussions we had about benefitting and indulging...and then telling others that they can't have that. We live in such a comfortable environment. We speak from comfort and warmth. I'll sit for ages and draw a person and people will get erased and more faces will come in. Who are we? Are we the disasters that we are fighting against? How do we not hurt ourselves as we break down ourselves? As someone who can be anarchist and burn it all...we are going to burn down with it. And what do people respond to, what works, what do people feel most connected to, what makes people change? People are radically fragile.

“I’ve become aware of how noisy my ‘bus’ is and how it can embody many different versions of myself.”

by Caitriona

I've been observing the resistances in me in terms of the Shifting Edges approaches and sessions and I've been realising that there are several voices and experiences there and that they're not in harmony. I've become aware of how noisy my 'bus' is and how it can embody many different versions of myself. And I don't always know which one is true. The bus has been quite loud over the last 6 months.

One of the voices that's been with me is frustration- frustration with the focus on 'self' at this time - why am I talking about emotions and not 'the thing'? Is this me still tiptoeing and not naming the actual elephants? And then other voices come in with different experiences.

In my [] experimenting I wanted to explore depolarisation activities and to see how to address difficult issues head on. And then I came across a Walt Whitman quote in the activity book - "do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself". So maybe what I'm taking with me is acceptance- acceptance that there are always conflicting voices. This bus of passengers - 'me' - is an interesting place to be at times

I am large, I contain multitudes
-Walt Whitman



**“unpicking colonial, imperialist, individualistic,
capitalist education**

**careful on my journey of learning to not
appropriate**

**mindful of the spaces I create, the choices I make
so that I might see the underneath structure
clearly without breaking it”**

by Jessica



This leaf represents my journey unpicking colonial, imperialist, individualistic capitalist education. Underneath are the true histories, ideas of lived experience and knowledge of people who did not seek to exploit and extract from this world. Who indeed once lived in symbiosis between humanity and the natural world.

Shifting edges allowed me to sit with my whiteness. To look at it from all angles. It's helped me acknowledge my ancestors who most likely added to the exploitation and oppression of this world and its people. I'm learning how to stand accountable for them whilst also acknowledging my own choices I bring to this world.

It's a slow and delicate process. Careful on my journey of learning not to appropriate and be mindful of the spaces I create, the decisions I make to help see the underneath structure clearly without breaking it.



“I haven’t really got to grips with complicity.”

by Susie (an off-the-cuff voicenote sent to a friend while out for a wander)

Am I able to sit with difficult knowledge because I'm an arsehole and I don't really care enough?...Or is it because it [difficult knowledge] is not present? I could sit in my chair now and think about how the planet is going to pot. Or I could be doing something useful. Or I could be enjoying the moment.

I haven't really got to grips with complicity. I know intellectually all these things, but I don't really feel them. And is this a failure on my part? It probably is. And there's a kind of gap in the sense of...our lifestyle, things that happen that we don't see. We throw stuff in the bin and someone takes it away and we don't have to see it. We don't have to see all the resources being created...so we don't have an appreciation of it all.

I don't hold 'difficult knowledge'.

You can experience this grief. But do you walk around with it all day long? When you're walking- as I am now- down the Rathgar road with the rain coming down and the roses? Does it serve me to be internalising this grief?

I'm either emotionally advanced or emotionally an absolute dummy. And I'm suspecting the latter.

“the deep felt sense that...I am safe”

words shared by Charlotte

What does it feel like to trust?

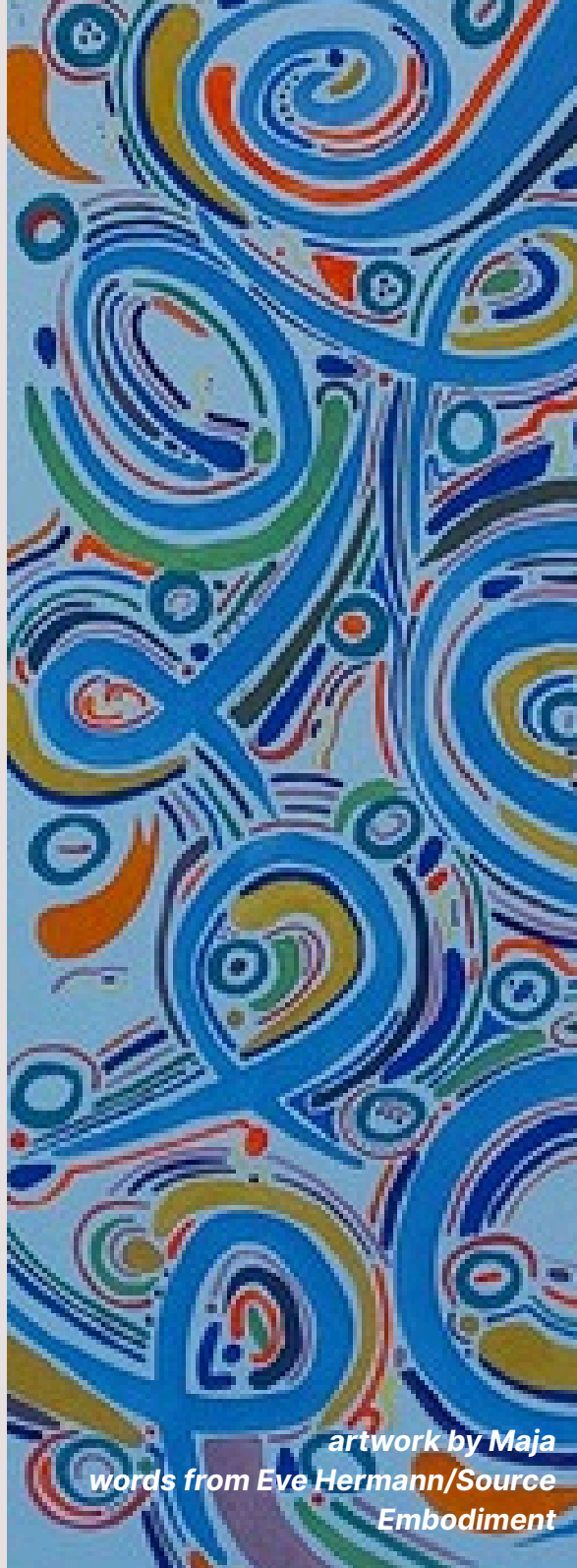
Somatic, body trust is the deep felt sense that “right now, all things being equal, I am relatively safe” and your body is responding to that in restful, “feeling-safe” ways.

softening
around
your eyes

an easier
breath

the easing of
tension
at the top
of your
shoulders

your belly
gurgling
and bubbling



artwork by Maja
words from Eve Hermann/Source
Embodiment

“There Is Nothing That Is Not Spirit”

words and images shared by Clare & Susie

In this body
in this
town of spirit
there is
a little house
shaped like a lotus
and in that house
there is a little space.

One should know
what is there.

What is there?
Why is it important?

There is as much
in that little space
within that little heart
as there is
in the whole world outside.

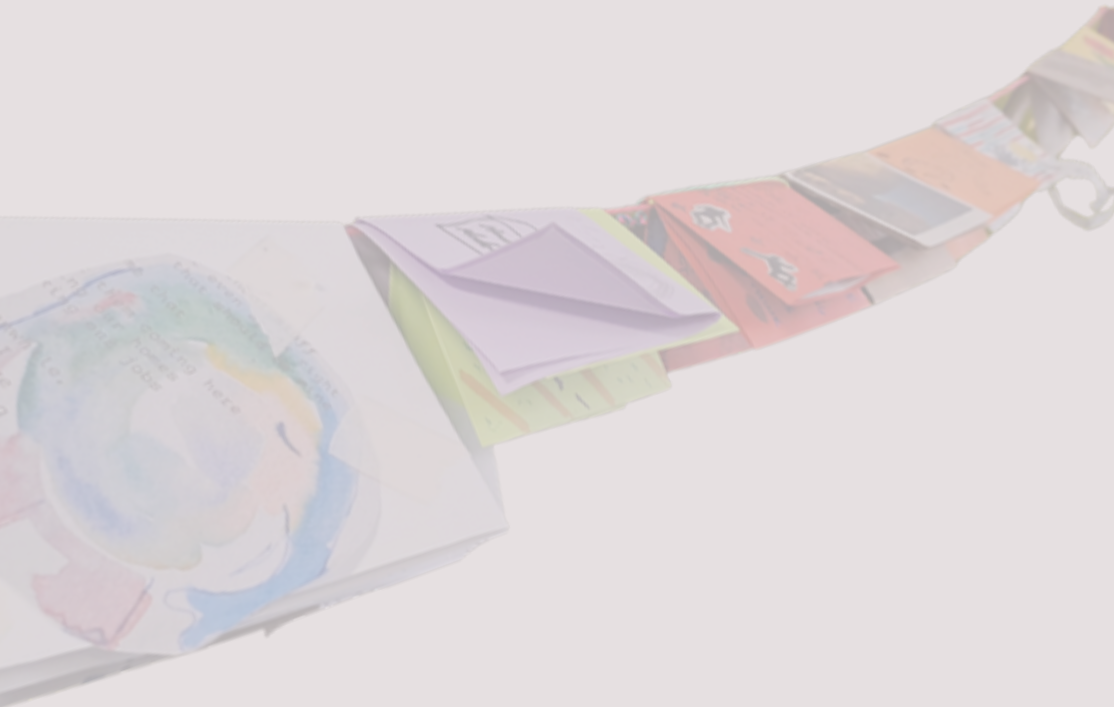


*text is from The Upanishads translated by
W.B. Yeats and Shri Purohit Swam*

Dear reader...

Again, as we come to the end of the chapter, an invitation to take a pause, a moment for reflection. And to gather thoughts, perhaps, around the themes that emerged for you in the texts above. How are you connecting with them?

As you pause, you might reflect on that idea of 'Comfort / stretch' – the part of this work that is about (dis)comfort, dissonance, disillusionment and how it shows up in us - really, a getting more familiar with the worlds inside of ourselves.



SHIFTING EDGES

X
I like the question
'how are you feeling'
instead of
'what do you do'
X



In this space
What's here
is




Talk about I
not other
groups feelings

Chapter IV

Learning Space and Atmosphere

what's here is....in this space what's here is....in this
space what's here is....in this space what's here is....
in this space what's here is....in this space what's here



“That’s how we grow capacity – not by knowing everything, but by being willing to stay in the room when it’s hard”

by Bronwyn, a guest contributor on Shifting Edges

This work is messy. It doesn’t always land. Sometimes we try something, and it flops. Sometimes we freeze. That’s not failure – that’s practice.

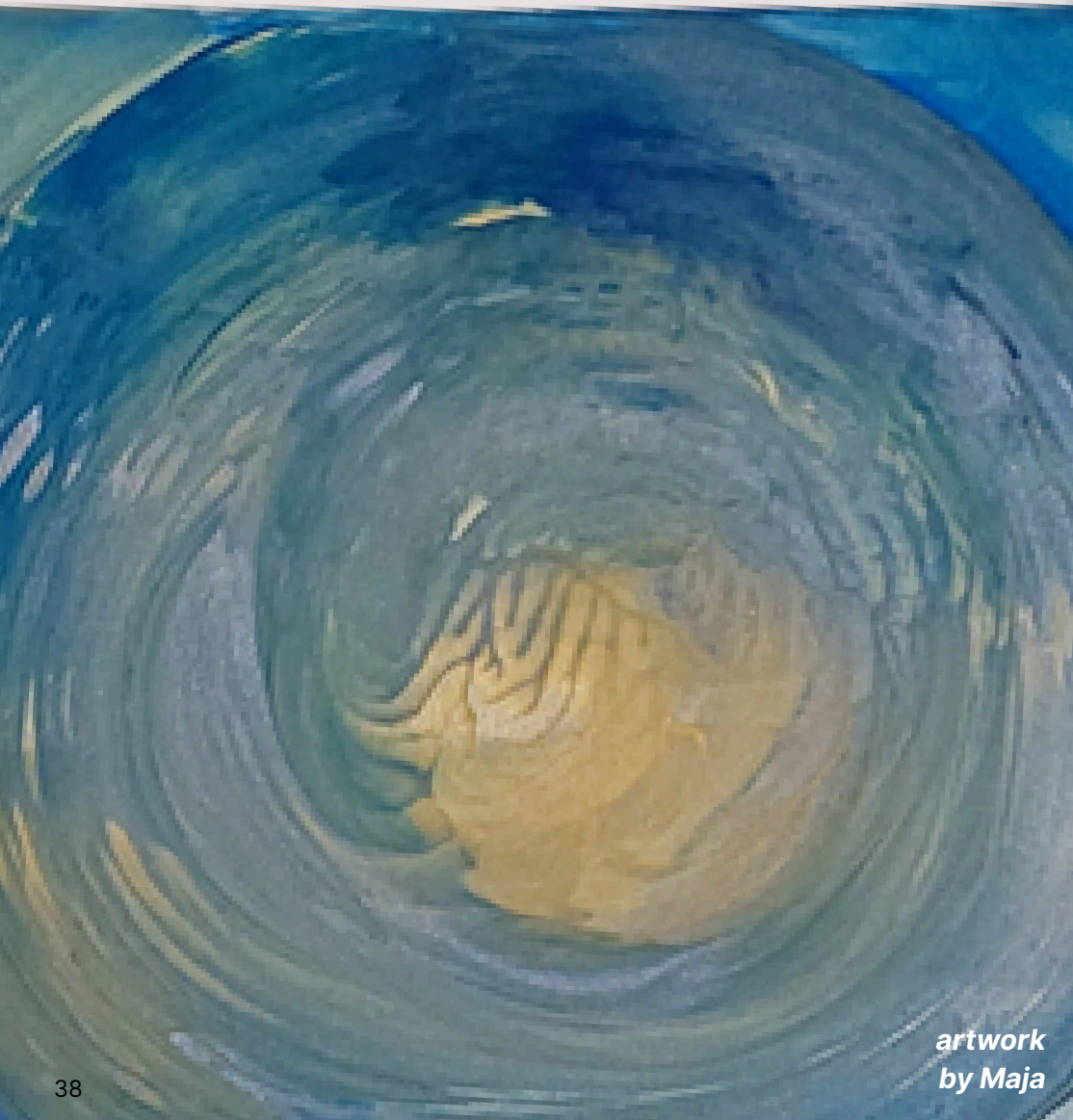
It’s all part of building the capacity to hold space, not just for others, but for ourselves too. You don’t have to get it right. There is room for clumsiness. There is room for awkwardness.

That’s how we grow capacity – not by knowing everything, but by being willing to stay in the room when it’s hard.

Be gentle with yourself.
Let others help you.
Let your communities support you.

The work you're doing is brave, and like any brave work, it requires softness too.

You don't have to have it all figured out to be useful. You just have to be real. And the more you can be honest about what's hard, the more permission you give others to be honest too.



“I have a chance to ask why. And it feels good to ask – to be curious about what it does to me”

by Nora

On lightness

In a group, I feel lightness when there is common understanding of ourselves as a group. Also when it's felt and understood that conflict and disagreements are okay ('it's okay to not agree')

On brave space

A space feels brave when people go to another level- when they are able to say 'the mood I feel in the room is' or 'the feeling I have about this is..' This kind of expression opens up room for emotions and for exploration of 'what is here right now'. It also feels brave when people say what they need for the learning.

On play

Play offers possibility for connection. I think about how easily I can do the joy/ play thing with kids – they allow themselves and that makes it easy for me, but how does it feel with adults - to interact and be silly with adults. I think about how that might feel uncomfortable for me and there I have a chance to ask why. And it feels good to ask – to be curious about what it does to me.

It's an exploration of discomfort.

I don't feel part of the group... I leave

Is there a place for me in the group?

I feel on the margins of the group, yet part

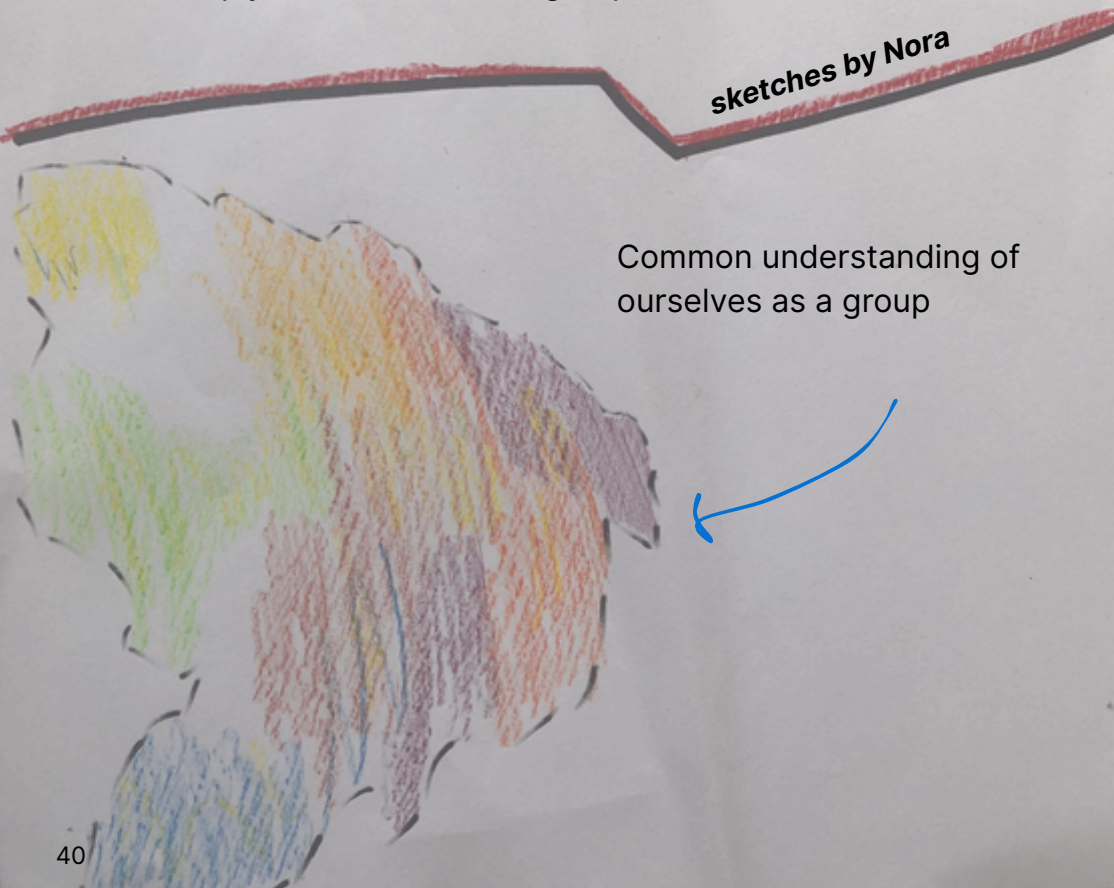
I feel part of the group

I feel deeply connected to the group



sketches by Nora

Common understanding of ourselves as a group



“We don’t have to get the topic right....but we have to get the community and build connection”

Miriam - a Thursday conversation with DEFY

We don't have to get the topic right, and the message right, and the campaign and the policy right that we campaign for, but we have to get the community and build connection. And that's more the focus. And then it goes away from the, what you say, social justice campaigning issues. And it goes toward seeing people with what they bring and accepting what they are in that moment, and not expecting more, but saying you are one part of the present moment, and we can connect through that and build something off it. And I think...I think that's for me.

“Sometimes the most radical thing in the room is simply someone saying “I’m not sure”

by Michael

Belonging...

...does not come by having the same views or using the same language, but about knowing that each one’s presence matters, their experience, their voice. This means paying attention to the atmosphere...think of a shared kitchen: a place to bring what you have, and to see what we can make together.

Hesitation...

... is not a problem to fix but part of the process. Many people carry all sorts of doubts. About whether they’re “activist enough” (good enough), whether they have the right knowledge, or whether small steps count at all...by naming those hesitations out loud, they loosen their grip. Sometimes the most radical thing in the room is simply someone saying, “I’m not sure”

photo by Maja, Wicklow Shifting Edges day

The grey space...

...is messy, but it's also alive. Full of possibility, honesty, and the slow, steady work of building a community where difference can sit alongside shared purpose

And in the grey...

...small actions matter. We celebrate tiny shifts. Someone speaking up at work, writing a letter, offering a skill to the group. These are not always the stories that make headlines, but they build confidence and connection. They make activism and change feel possible.



“and sometimes if you go very close, you can feel resistance and that’s feedback that something challenging is going on”

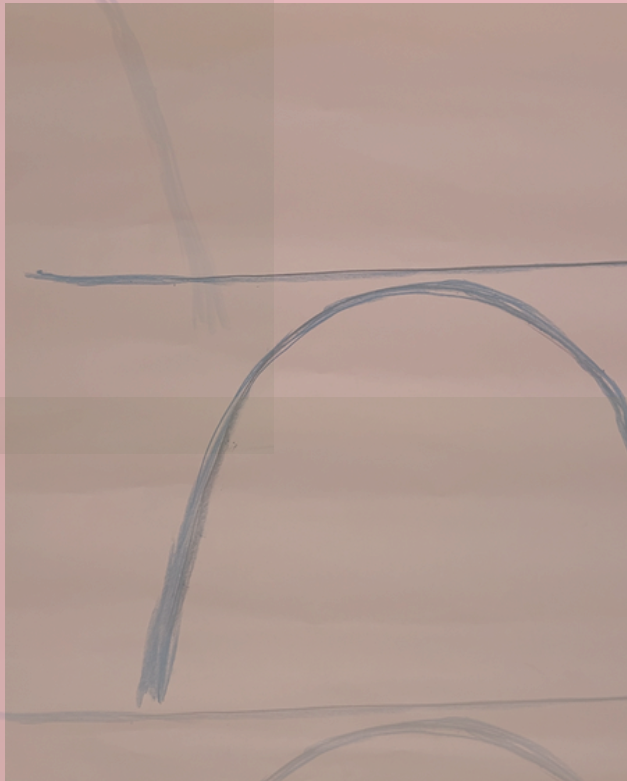
by Niamh

The curvy shape is the swelling of curiosity - of coming up to see what’s going on with another person or a group. All the space beyond the line is unknown - it’s what’s happening ‘beyond’.

The line is the boundary that’s there when you’re trying to get close, when you’re trying to get a sense of what’s happening.

Something I found when I was working in spaces and trying to support depth learning, was that I would move in a way that had a lot of curiosity and momentum and that this could lead me to bump up against this boundary or wall.

I’ve been thinking about how to get close to it without crashing into it or bringing too much momentum into the space.



Intense

by Britta

Intense
In a way
that makes more sense
than expected.

Let yourself fall
in a hall
of silence.

Anxiety,
a rush of emotions,
variety of thoughts
brought up by collected memories.

Wondering,
watching,
whispers in your head
keep you wandering.

Peace of mindful
listening, pausing,
reflecting yourself
in familiar eyes.

A young female gaze
Immersing in the haze
Of future longings
Based on belonging
To a white middle class
Academic mass.
What a mess to mess around respectfully.

photo by Miriam



organizing

What are our
issues

... feminist Sen
... and politics
sent by Toi Swick
Deepe

It is within
relationship that
we hold the greatest
power

THIS IS
HOW WE
CONNECT

Kelly
waves

Andrea J. Davis
Abolition 2007 conference
Retain/ing Abolition

What do we
care about

What do we
have in
common

artwork by Jessica

Dear reader,

As we draw to a close, how are you?

Across the pieces on 'learning space and atmosphere' can you see this thread of relationality.

So, yes to a focus on 'I', to "self" , to bringing our attention inward...and all so that we might dig deeper, relate wider, for and with others.



belonging

brave

the place for hesitation

for not knowing

...towards an ending. And a continuing

by Sive

And I was actually thinking about things that people have shared, and you know it's not just about the education space, but about all spaces that we're in. Like, in terms of spaces that might orient toward change and want to connect to make something else happen and create more possibility for something better.

So, the words I was recalling from the pieces just now were belonging, brave, multitudes, the place for hesitation, for not knowing.

It's almost like if I'm trying to work out what this has been about, then I can go look at the stuff that people have drawn, written, scribbled, said.

And there is a pattern there. It's not that they all fit together like a jigsaw, but what is common is that they pay attention to the kinds of things that are generally sidelined - the things that are not often considered and yet yearned for.

artwork
by Maja



✓ Gratitude and acknowledgement

Gratitude and acknowledgement

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Appendices: A little more background to DEFY (Depth Education for Youth) and Shifting Edges

In a 2021 global survey of 10,000 young people, two-thirds reported feeling sad, afraid and anxious in the face of ecological crisis. Many others reported feeling fear, anger, despair, grief and shame.

This domain of 'difficult-knowledge' and feeling states or 'affect' has been DEFY's field of interest since 2023. Drawing on a host of educators and scholar-activists, the project creates rare spaces for educators working in or adjacent to Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to step away from familiar loops of hope-full, actionable solutions in the face of intensifying crises, to inquire into that which is being felt and to understand such engagement as integral to deeper learning and to change.

This is DEFY's 2nd zine. It carries texts that emerged through *Shifting Edges*, an extended DEFY journey for educators into difficult-knowledge and discomfort.

Bringing together 25 participants from Ireland, Slovenia and Germany, *Shifting Edges* ran between January and September 2025 and combined online evening sessions and in-person workshops with a period of "action-experimenting".

As part of *Shifting Edges*, participants engaged in a period of action-experimenting.

Adapted from the Emergent Strategy Principles of adrienne maree brown and inspired by Bayo Akomolafe's writing on 'cracks', the following was offered to participants as a guide to action-experimenting:

Discern what it is that you need to be experimenting with.

Keep 'elephants-in-the-room' and **awareness of (dis)comfort** close.

See how you might leverage a shift in the system by **how you are** as much as by the things you do.

Pay attention to what happens as you experiment.

Think 'community'- what you try will always be happening in a context and impacting on others.

Vary shapes and scales - '**small can be all**' (the complexity can still be there).

Play with **going to-the-side** (towards the less obvious, into the undergrowth).

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This Zine is part of a series
The full series can be found on:
<https://linktr.ee/the.defy.collective>



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