

# I Used to ... but Now I

## A Poem About Enhancing the Midwifery Student Experience

Part of the  
ESME: Resources for Sense-Able Conversations Pack

Supported by the



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# Introduction

I Used to ... but Now I is a poem written as a reflective exercise by participants involved in a project exploring how to enhance learning experiences among midwifery students and midwives (ESME Research Study- Exploring Student Midwives' Experiences). The lines in the poem are the voices of the midwifery students, midwives and Essentials of Care Co-Ordinators who were part of this project. You can read the poem as it is presented in this resource; it has also been visually represented in the form of a film with the words of the poem accompanied by images.

This film is available on the Intranet.



Alongside the I Used to ...But Now I poem this booklet also has 3 resources which can be used, after reading the poem, to stimulate further personal and group reflection.

These include:

- Poem Ponderings- a set of questions to support reflecting on the words of the poem
- Outside the Box Reflections- an activity to encourage people to explore key topics from the poem in fresh ways
- Unfolding Poem- a recipe for people to develop their own poem

Each of these resources are suitable for use as stand-alone activities in a variety of contexts including during conversation in everyday practice between midwifery students and midwives, and in University prior to or following clinical placements.



## I Used to .. but Now I

Noticing vulnerability in others and checking out how they are feeling, taking the time to give a warm welcome and remembering people's names rather than referring to them as the midwife or the student, checking out with each other and planning what our learning hopes are for the shift ahead, noticing what we value about each other and saying this out loud in the moment. Noticing I am lost and helping me to find my way and including and acknowledging me. Not telling me what to do but giving me options and working together on these. Getting to know something about me as a person.

What is a good learning experience for us all? These things are. This is how we define it. How can we help it to happen more of the time?

Not knowing what's going on unless I ask, people not introducing themselves to us or asking my name, feeling hemmed in and not being asked to contribute to decisions, struggling to meet work and family commitments, not knowing what I am doing well, people talking over me and not including me in conversations, feeling embarrassed to talk about intimate things with women, not knowing things and being too scared to ask. Good to find out, good to ask, good to talk, good to share. Learning about other's experience – the most powerful teacher.

We notice the specialness of things that might seem routine – Like walking with me to show me where to put my bag and asking me questions along the way to get to know one another.



# I Used to .. but Now I

Assumptions, assumptions, assumptions. We all make them. We could check them out.

I didn't realize that the student liked to be able to care for women on her own with the midwife supporting them in the background. The student said she felt trusted.

I didn't realize that midwives enjoyed having students in the unit especially because they were a fresh pair of eyes and helped the midwives to reflect.

I didn't realize that students were not a burden.

I didn't realize the midwife was not disconnected with us but that she felt overwhelmed because the shift was busy.

I didn't realize that the midwife wanted to develop her teaching skills – I thought she knew it all.

I didn't realize that the student had lots of skills from working in the emergency department that were valued in this environment.

I didn't realize how upset she was about receiving the complaint.



# I Used to .. but Now I

Checking out assumptions. There's an element of surprise. Keeps us on our toes. Stops us thinking about how we think people should learn in the workplace and makes us ask about how we want to learn and develop.

Knowing how people are feeling helps us to connect. Sharing feelings can be scary. Exploring feelings can feel like taking a risk. Learning that if a person says they feel proud, let down, comfortable, overwhelmed, powerless or privileged, this is real and cannot be disputed.

It takes courage to share how we feel. What do you think about that, what are you going to do now, how do you feel about that, what helps you to do that?

Talking about our experiences, sharing stories about caring and learning, sharing how we feel about caring and learning. No time to talk about caring and learning, make time to talk about caring and learning. Without this we can't reflect and develop.

Where am I now?

I used to feel very nervous and insecure when starting a placement.

Now I feel more confident to ask questions and let staff know where I am up to.

I used to sit in the front row of chairs at handover with my back to people and wasn't aware of who was in the room.



# I Used to .. but Now I

Now I move the chairs into a semi-circle so all staff and students feel included.

I used to say strengths and weaknesses. Now I say strengths and areas to develop.

I used to be worried about not knowing things. Now I know it's OK not to know and I ask.

I used to ask students what their strengths were I still do. Now I ask them if they want to learn about my strengths.

I used to do all the interventions with the mother while the student observed.

Now I plan interventions with the student and encourage them to do what they are comfortable to do.

I used to just go with what the midwife said or did. But now I feel curious to ask more questions.

I used to think about team work as pulling together to get tasks done. Now it's not just about tasks. We check in with how we are feeling.

I used to stress about having a student as it would have an impact in fitting in everything I had to do in the day. Now I value having a student to share our work, learn from each other and the work gets done.



# I Used to .. but Now I

I used to think I knew her well. Now I know how to get to know people better and share more about me.

I used to ask for feedback at the end of the shift. Now I check in and ask for feedback in the moment as the day goes on.

I used to say "having a student". Now I say working together with a student.

I used to assume what the student needed. Now we share our hopes for learning together.

Taking the time to have caring conversations turns phrases like engagement, student centred, openness, respect and empowerment into reality. Be brave, it takes courage to ask and share but it makes a difference to all of us.



# Poem Ponderings

## About the Resource

Poem Ponderings is a set of questions which can be used to support reflection on the words of the poem.

They invite a reflective process of firstly noticing what we have connected with and would like to celebrate, moving to what we are wondering about and possibly hadn't considered before, to finally using one's responses to the first four questions to consider what this might be telling us about what we would value going forward.

## Using the Resource

The questions below are designed to be responded to in the sequence they appear below. This could be done as an individual or group activity.

1. Were there words or lines you particularly connected with in the poem?
2. What was there to celebrate in what you heard?
3. Were there aspects of the poem that intrigued or puzzled you?
4. Were there any new ideas or angles in the poem you hadn't considered before?
5. From reading, listening to and reflecting on the poem on your own or with others:
  - was there a particular part of the poem you would like to share with others?
  - has anything come up for you about how you would like things to be in the future?
  - have any ideas emerged about one small thing you might ask more about or do tomorrow?



# Outside the Box Reflections

## About the Resource

Outside the Box Reflections is a resource which can be used to encourage people to explore topics they possibly hadn't considered in depth before, and/or to explore familiar topics through a different lens.

Over leaf are purple boxes which contain themes from the I Used to ... but Now I poem. In the yellow boxes are some prompts to stimulate reflection on the themes. There are blank boxes for other themes or prompts to be added.

## Using the Resource

Invite people to:

### Option 1

Select a topic from the purple boxes that feels new or different to explore

Then, select an option from the yellow boxes, and use this to frame how you explore the purple box topic

### Option 2

Select a topic from the purple boxes that feels familiar, one that you have spent time reflecting on.

Then, look to the yellow boxes and see if there are any of the prompts that may be a new way for you to approach this topic and use this to explore the topic further



# Outside the Box Reflections

Checking out  
assumptions

Not  
knowing

Exploring  
feelings

Noticing the  
special things

Exploring other  
people's  
experiences

My thoughts

My feelings

My questions

My ideas

My learning



# Unfolding Poem

## About the Resource

The Unfolding Poem uses 6 prompts (sentence starters) from the I Used to ... but Now I poem as the starting point for inviting people to create their own poem. The Unfolding Poem method can encourage people to move away from stock responses and to tap into other parts of their heart, mind and body.

## Using the Resource

This activity could be done as a reflective exercise after listening, reading or watching the video of the poem- or as a follow-on activity to synthesise what people are taking away from the Poem Ponderings or Outside the Box Reflections activities.

The 6 Unfolding Poem Sentence-Starters are:

A good learning experience for me is ...

Exploring feelings feels ...

Checking out assumptions ...

I feel confident to ask questions when...

I didn't realise that ...

I notice the specialness ...



# Unfolding Poem

## Using the Unfolding Poem Method

Items Needed:

Paper and pen for each participant.

You may also want to have the sentence starters in visual form for people to read themselves, on individual large pieces of paper or on a slide show.

## Introducing the Activity

Let the person know that you will be giving them the start of a sentence (taken from the I Used to ... but Now I poem) and asking them to finish the sentence in their own words. And that they will be writing 6 lines in total.

Remind the participant/s that the theme of the poem relates to the I Used to and Now i poem and to their own experiences of relationships and learning between midwives and students midwives.

Read out the first sentence starter- ' a good learning experience for me is...' and invite participants to write their response. Repeat the sentence starter a couple of times and wait until everyone has had chance to write their response before moving on to the second sentence starter.. Repeat process for remaining sentence starter.



# Unfolding Poem

## Continuing the Discussion

The following are some options for continued discussion, if time allows, once people are finished writing their poem.

- Asking people to share a line or more from their poem
- Opening up discussion on what people are now thinking about in relation to the themes from their poem and the I Used to ... and Now I poem
- Inviting reflections on how people found the activity of writing the poem