

Pino:

My name is Pino and I'm a co-researcher.

Sarah:

I'm Sarah, I'm the associate director of Heart n Soul at The Hub.

Alice:

I'm Alice Carey, and I am Hub partnerships manager for Wellcome.

Pino:

It's true. We are like a family.

Sarah:

Yeah. When we started the project, we had this idea that we needed to find, do you remember this Pino? We needed to find lots of people who didn't know Heart n Soul, and that they should be part of the project. After a while, I think we kind of thought actually, this material is so deep, we need to explore it ourselves in depth. We need to have that trust and relationship between us. So we decided to go deep rather than wide, I suppose.

Pino:

Yes. Before we could do it with anybody else we'd study it with ourselves.

Sarah:

What'd you think about that, Alice? I mean, because you weren't closely involved at that time. Were you surprised by us doing it that way?

Alice:

When you've actually got these really close and meaningful relationships together, that that's where you would... You would dig where you stand. That's where you would start, so that you don't have to just spend months and months and months building the trust before you can even start.

Pino:

We've been doing this for years.

Sarah:

And of course there were new people. So like all the researchers were new, working with university people, and I think actually building those relationships, those were the significant new relationships between the Heart n Soul people and the people from the universities. And that was a big enough thing to focus on, you know.

Pino:

Oh yeah, definitely.

Alice:

There's something interesting around power dynamics, isn't there? When essentially you were the in-group in that you held the reins really of the project and it was all your well-established relationships that were the bedrock for the relationships you needed for the research. I can't really speak to just a general research context, but I suppose it just maybe comes back to maybe a more general idea of what it is to be proper or to be professional in some way. What we expect in certain

environments and how much we're allowed to bring our whole self to spaces that are for our work or for our jobs. In lots of people's working contexts, you have to kind of try and keep your own emotions, you have to manage them somehow, even if they're being provoked by the environment or the people you're with, and there's maybe a sense of shame or secrecy around feelings, difficult feelings. And perhaps what's being modeled in The Hub is a different way, where all feelings are allowed, they're not ranked or judged.

Pino:

Well, we've all got feelings, haven't we?

Alice:

Absolutely. And also feelings are another way of understanding each other and another source of information that can be very important in trying to discover new ways of thinking and being. Maybe if they have not been used to talking about their feelings or even feeling their feelings fully, it might be they feel quite vulnerable. It takes practice.

Pino:

I find easy to talk about my feelings, but then I can easily get upset at the end. It depends how upsetting it can be.

Sarah:

People at Heart n Soul are more comfortable than many others to share how they feel.

Pino:

Yes, they do, because we look for answers. For help.

Alice:

Also, maybe it isn't so much about types of people as the way that a space is set up. So, one person might really struggle to express or connect with their feelings in a certain context, but Heart n Soul have a lot of skill and experience in making it....

Pino:

Well, that's why I called it Heart n Soul.

Sarah:

Knowing when to sort of suggest that maybe it's better not to continue talking about something, it's that judgment is really, really important.

Alice:

I guess then that's things that have maybe being historically framed as soft skills or seen as somehow secondary are actually really critical of what's needed in these contexts.

Sarah:

Yeah. And going back to that relationships of trust, that role, I think can't really be done well by somebody who hasn't got those relationship with everybody. You can't hire in a safeguarding person.

Alice:

A word I've learned in the last six months, thanks to Theresa actually in the Collection, is positionality. I think probably it's a slightly American word but it seems to speak to this where it's not only people

understanding their own position, but actually being asked to reveal it and share it.

Pino:

Some people are frightened to talk to people about their feelings. Some of them are... It's hard, difficult to... They don't really say anything about themselves.

Alice:

And yet there's an expectation that some people will reveal a lot about themselves. And I think it's that uneven distribution, that's part of some of the power dynamics that can be really damaging.

Sarah:

Even little things like at the beginning of the project, we all drew our own emojis and everybody had to present themselves, draw themselves in some way. I mean, that was a very equalizing thing to do. I also liked that bit right at the beginning where Will was talking about when people normally submit projects for funding, it's all about you, you, you, he said didn't he? And there's nothing really about how you're going to care for people. And I hear it a lot, being around the Wellcome is a very new experience for me, but I do hear people talking a lot about my research, my research project, my research grant application. It seems to be very personalised and often hinges around an iconic individual.

Alice:

I think there is something really interesting about how expertise gets named and accounted for and made visible. Absolutely you don't have

to be a professor, but there's a problem too if your expertise you bring is called lived experience, on how you might get mined for life experiences and information that other people who have a professionalised label that they're there with, might not be expected to share as much. And then that just serves to, I don't know, maybe sometimes reproduce or even exacerbate certain power dynamics.

Sarah:

I was wondering when Will said something like people don't understand the feeling you can get in the room.

Pino:

That's it. They don't understand the feeling. That's it.

Sarah:

I think that was something possibly about, if everybody's experience is genuinely equal and valued, the feeling you get in the room, that sort of dynamic of learning and new ways of doing stuff...

Pino:

Well, not everybody knows about people with disability, do they?

Sarah:

Yeah. So you don't get that feeling. And I think he was sort of saying that feeling for him is a kind of source of learning. And he talked about outputs, how it influences the actual outputs that you're going to get.

Alice:



And also that idea that you write an application and rather than hitting the ground running, to use quite a funder kind of phrase, you do quite the opposite. Once it actually is brought to life by the real people that populate the pages when you're writing it, you have to start putting in the care and the time and actually take time to slow down and not just speed into all the objectives and deliverables that you listed to win the award.