

# Presence-In-Action #1

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## Potent Alchemy

*enabling personal and systemic transformation*

### The Game of Life - dancing with emergence

It has been a while - nearly three years - since I last sent a newsletter. Much will have changed for you and so my database is likely to be out-of-date. If you do not want to receive anything from me in future, please do unsubscribe using the link at the end of email.

And if you fancy a wee-ish read.... here goes!

So, what have I been up to? **A PhD in dancing with emergence!** What on earth is that and how does it sit with good-old-fashioned, **evidence-based practice**? Well... my PhD does and doesn't quite sit there... more crucially, it does have its place where there are people, being people, trying to survive and thrive amidst the struggles of life, relationships, work, wars, abuse, traumas, global complexities or even the miniscule daily frustrations that arise when the world and other people are not how we think they 'should be'! This is what links my research, not only to my life and practice, but to the lives of others.

But, first: what does '**evidence-based practice**' or '**research-based evidence**' mean? Now I am not going to venture into a deep philosophical exploration here. Let me attempt to put this simplistically (which means my making rather large generalisations, so forgive me): when people use these terms they generally mean that a methodological approach has been taken, driven (often unconsciously) by assumptions held within traditional scientific (objective/rational) research. In one scenario, it is assumed that 'influencing' factors/variables can be eliminated to identify or test out 'cause-effect' correlations and/or an hypothesis. The researcher will conduct some kind of experiment or 'field-work', the data from which will be collected and analysed; and then, finally, conclusions and recommendations will be drawn - or perhaps, a new theory/model/concept may be proposed. Often, so-called 'objective', evidence-based research is a numbers/ probability game seeking proof, 'predict-ability' and replicability of results. Even in the psycho/social sciences (where what goes on for individuals and between/amongst people may be the focus of research) many researchers still find themselves unwittingly shackled to the assumptions that shape traditional science approaches (yes even in Doctoral research convention!). In these scenarios, typically we may see some or all the following: linear, cause-effect thinking; narrowing the focus of the research to look at 'parts' rather than 'wholes'; employing metaphors that suggest nature and human beings can be treated/researched as if they are machine-like; the pursuit of improving prediction and control; 'promise-to-deliver' claims attached to goal/outcome-oriented planning, management and coaching practices; methods and processes that follow sequences like: 'brainstorming or qualitative data-collection, categorising, analysing, prioritising, concluding, recommending'. All are possible signs of traditional science thinking and practices potentially leaking into complex realms (e.g. human systems) where they do not (wholly) fit.

Let me be clear, there IS a place for the above kinds of research, however my research does not reside there. I am taking a different approach underpinned by a 'complexity thinking' paradigm. And, as I now understand it, my undertaking is an embodiment of what Alan Bayner (2017)

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### Learning Events

**Cafe Conversations:**  
 ☼ **Hear from those with stories to tell!**

[London/Surrey: 2017 - 5 Dec;](#)

**2018 - 29 Jan, 26 Mar**

[Edinburgh: +2017 - 13 Nov;](#)

**2018 - 3 May, 29 Aug**

**One-day introduction: EPIA**  
 ☼ **Experience Presence-in-Action**

[London/Surrey: 2017 - 26 Feb](#)

[Edinburgh: 2017 - 23 Nov](#)

**Four-day intensive: POPIA**  
 ☼ **Accessing the Power of Presence-in-Action**

[London/Surrey: 2018 - 17-20](#)

**May**

**Caux, Switzerland: 2018 - June tbc**

[Edinburgh: 2018 - 18-21](#)

**September**

**Coaching + Coaching Supervision for those in business, public life, Sport & the Arts**

☼ **Enabling personal + systemic change**

[Edinburgh/Glasgow,](#)

[London/Surrey](#)

**Other locations may be available on request**

And, as I now understand it, my undertaking is an embodiment of what Alan Kayner (2017) refers to as nature's principle: Natural Inclusion. My research is unusual in that it does not follow dominant academic conventions which are derived from traditional scientific practice. Instead I have been engaging in the game of life, played nature's way. I believe it is time for more of us to step into this dance with emergence - to not reject rationality but to put it in its place alongside all else that is in play - as my poem, : 'Lay to rest, Descartes', invites. This refers to the man in Western science, credited with (blamed for) amplifying the body/mind split.

So, in my research I am reflexively **dancing** with what emerges within, between and beyond me, as I support others when coaching, training supervising and facilitating. Now, I do not mean 'dancing' as in the BBC reality show 'Strictly Come Dancing' where one person (the man) always leads and one person (the woman) always follows! Something infinitely more complex is at play when engaging in the dance with/of emergence. So, what is different?



- First: no one knows what the dance will actually be or become ahead of time, so no one can lead always or follow always. This dance truly is one of co-creation. Therefore every action/interaction is simultaneously both an act of leadership and followership - a call and a response, in which the enacted response becomes the call to the next response.
- Second: none of us knows who or how many may actually show up to be in the dance. If they come, then we dance together and if they don't, then whoever remains is left to dance with all that is within and around them.
- Third: the nature, pace, rhythm and flow of the dance may change as the context and people present, change.
- Fourth: there is no end in sight; the point is to dance when you are moved to dance and to surrender to whatever comes as a consequence; to pause for breath and to attend within, between and beyond; and then to leave the dance when an inner urge has you move on.
- Fifth: the dance of emergence follows not the commands from mental abstractions/theories/ demands that claim to know what is/should be. It does not give primacy to rational domination; rather it flounders or flourishes based on our capacity to bridge imaginary divides and to converse co-creatively with each other and our world through our entire being/bodies
- Sixth: with no grand design and no mighty controller, the only way to be in this dance is to attend to what is present with every known and unknown/un-named faculty available to us - to access the power of 'Presence-in-Action'.

In this, my PhD dance with emergence, quite surprisingly, I found myself writing poetry! I had never aspired to do this but increasingly I discovered that linear prose could not express what was bursting forth within me. This, for me, is evidence of my being in the dance with life - following what comes through me, neither denying nor suppressing what is arising; and not trying to command something into being...

And in my work with myself and others, we use the P6 Constellation to equip ourselves to develop the acuity to be IN this dance with life with increasing agility, fluency and artistry. We get to experience the delights, wonder and joy of bearing witness to our own and other's daily transformation. If you are curious, why not come along to meet and hear stories from others who are already in this dance?

For Presence-in-Action events: [Eventbrite](#)

For Coaching/Supervision: [P6 Coaching+Supervision](#)



## Lay to rest, Descartes

She<sup>[1]</sup> has risen, finally to lay to rest, Descartes – he who tore asunder that which was whole, and held as One so dear, by Heraclitus.

What grave distress and disarray we find ourselves amidst! Catastrophes abound, made manifest by man upon the ground, which, in arrogance, he claimed was his inviolable domain. Not so!

What shame befalls the man and men who swallowed whole the pill of Grand Delusion?

What shame for he – Descartes - and they, who clutched for power o'er universal destiny?

What shame for those who lost regard for all which held the pulse and purity of Life in unity?

That which was split, now proves its irreducibility. We are undone unless - until She integrates bit-parts; re-shapes nonsense shards; returns, amends and blends those fissured fragments into the wholes and holes they always were.

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are already in the dance.



Our various learning events open the space for newcomers to get a taste of this (Cafe Conversations); or have an experience (EPIA); or dive in to access the power of Presence-in-Action for yourselves (POPIA). Follow the links in the column opposite.

And for now, let me leave you with another of my early PhD poems... I remember how earnest I felt as I began to write this. I also noticed how I tipped into frustration and rising anger as my words came into view on the screen... I am curious about what happens to you as you read it?

## This Game called Life

Why join the **fray** to **play** this Game called Life?

For you with godly claims, who state you know and can control - beyond all shadows of doubt - your fate, best dare not volunteer. For, if you profess to know for sure what next to do, and who will win - then know for sure, you'll search in vain for proof to validate your mythic tale.

But if doubt mocks and flirts; or scratches, shrieks and tears away the blinds that blind your mind...

And if life's unfolding storylines tease - through twists and turns - your sense of what is meant and meant to be...

And if you can stand before this naked truth and stare it in the face, long enough to face the truth of you reflected back...

...then back in time, you'll find the time when knowing never was the point.

Back then, with child-like minds and hearts and hands, we made and changed the games we played. We tried: we failed and cried; triumphed and laughed; until constrained and

2017

[1] "She" refers to SAM – Symmathesic Agency Model - an output of my research. Symmathesy is a term coined by Nora Bateson (2016) to refer to trans-system learning



## Emotions - friends or foes?

Over my 31 years of full-time work, I have discovered that very many adults have come to fear their emotions. I used to be one of them. Then I discovered that if I viewed them as simple data - when I paid attention to them - they opened up a portal through which I could begin to understand what was happening to me. I began to see and appreciate that there was a complex dynamical interplay going on inside me... and over many years of living and learning, I began to see patterns and to discover what seemed to bring those patterns into play. Decades on, the P6 Constellation came into view.

It is the distillation of my life's learning thus far and I draw on it every single day - in my life, my work, my relationships with others; in the groups I facilitate; the organisations in which I consult and with the individuals I coach and supervise; and the friends and family I support. To aid the recognition and naming of emotions I created the (c) Emotions Palette.



They are beautiful, practical; and surprisingly powerful in how they illuminate and create the potential for personal change.

shamed by adult frames, we learned to play THEIR one and only finite game:

***'To win is all!'***

Yet: let's not forget that in this space – just One can take first place; whilst all the rest lose face and face the shame of second best. How come we make this so? When not to win means, for most, a life of coming last? What bitter brutal games to play – to all-bar-One, displace and disregard the billions of our human race who, in this Finite chase, forever find themselves behind. This cannot be the only way!

I kid you not! Tear down the blinds; strip away the veils and take THIS step. Reflect the truth; and see anew, the You that knew that deep joy comes - not from knowing how to win - but learning how to change the rules for each and every one of us to find our place, and play our part in shaping Life's forever dance.

So, let us take the floor and take a chance with all who care enough to dare enough. Reach down to touch the ground to feel the pulse and find the beat. Turn down the raging noise that screams and reels around your head. Let tears roll and rinse your stinging eyes so they can open wide to beauty in the beast.

Then stand your ground and plant your feet so you can sound the call for all to hear:

***'I'm in! I'm here.  
Come play this precious Game called Life!'***

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As a client of one of our recently trained Coaches exclaimed:

***'Moving around the Potent 6 Constellation enabled me to step out of the chaos .....this was probably one of the best coaching sessions yet, I can see it so clearly now!'***



**Shop with us**

We now have our very own [Potent6 shop online](#) where you can order various [products](#) e.g. Emotions Palettes, postcards; [learning events, consulting & coaching/supervision](#) , or book a place on one of our [Eventbrite learning events](#)

You can also Visit our [Redbubble shop](#) if you want to order Emotional cushions etc.

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