

Imagining and designing the future of genetic counselling with the new generation of genetic counsellors

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BACKGROUND

Genomic medicine is forcing a re-evaluation of the roles of genetic counsellors as new opportunities emerge.

Education providers have an exciting opportunity to prepare future generations of genetic counsellors for new and emerging roles.

To develop students' future-orientation and explore their hopes, vision and expectations for the future of the profession, we engaged them in a 'making' workshop during their first week on campus.

WHAT IS 'MAKING'?

'Making', is a design technique used to facilitate collective sense-making of a problem space.

Participants work with a range of craft materials, images and words to make present and future states, creating a way for imagined futures to become more tangible and able to be 'seen' ¹.

'Making' involves groups working to create imagined future states together by 'doing', tapping into implicit knowledge about how they feel and imagine in ways that can't be easily expressed in words ¹.

WHAT DID WE MAKE?

Common goals and strong connections facilitating accessibility for all

"I imagine in future everything will be more streamlined. The cylinder represents no barriers. A continuous process everything flows through... and in the middle of the cylinder we have our genetic counsellors." – Helen *

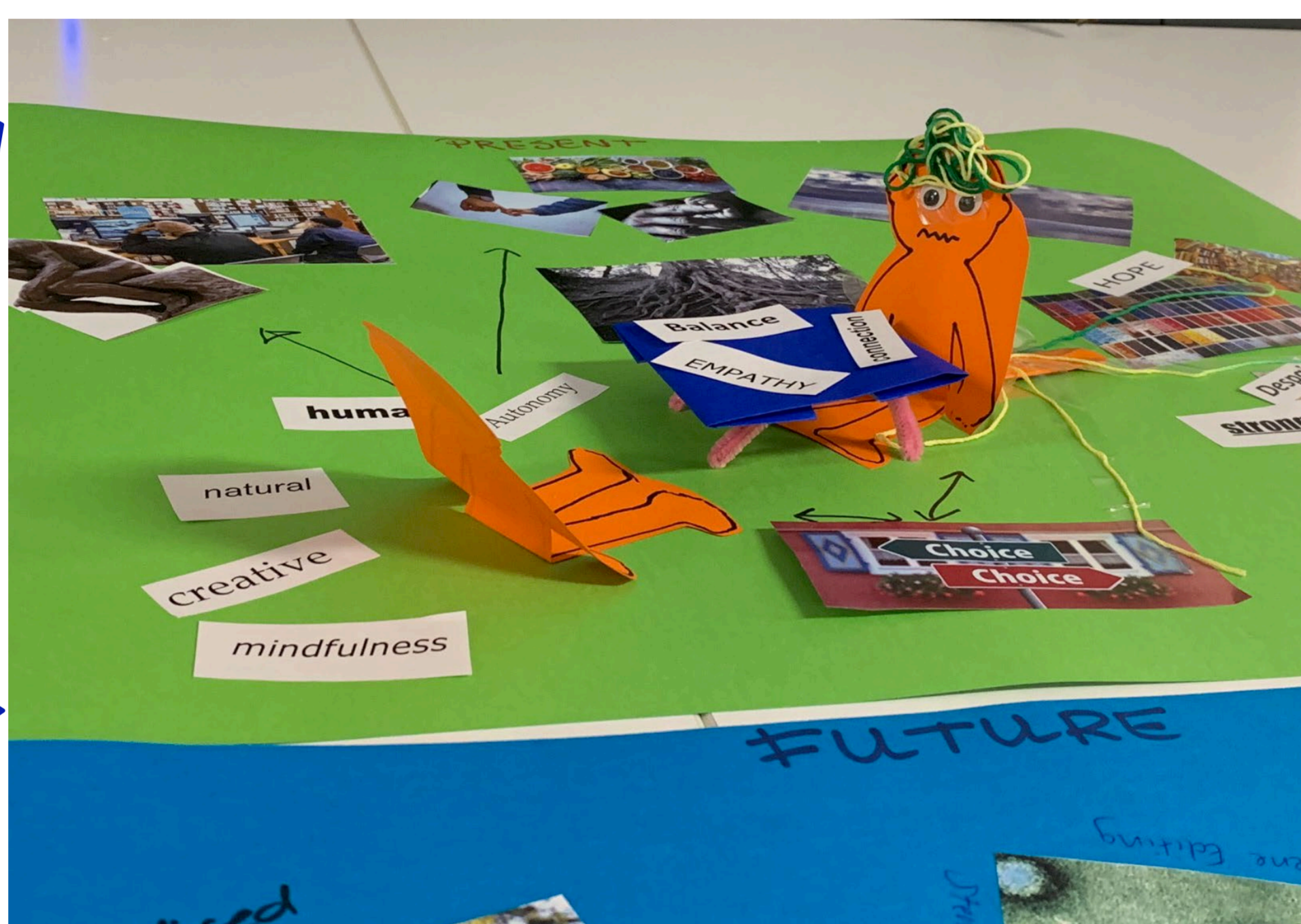
"Genetic counsellors are holding everything together to create balance between different fields. Rope represents [being] tied together." – Anna *

"...sitting at a table with a client looking at connection and balance and empathy and the genetic counsellor brings all these really good qualities with them but for the client it's like a brain explosion when they get that kind of news and all the feelings that go through them...the genetic counsellor can be like a little ray of hope in the middle of a desert..." – Abigail *

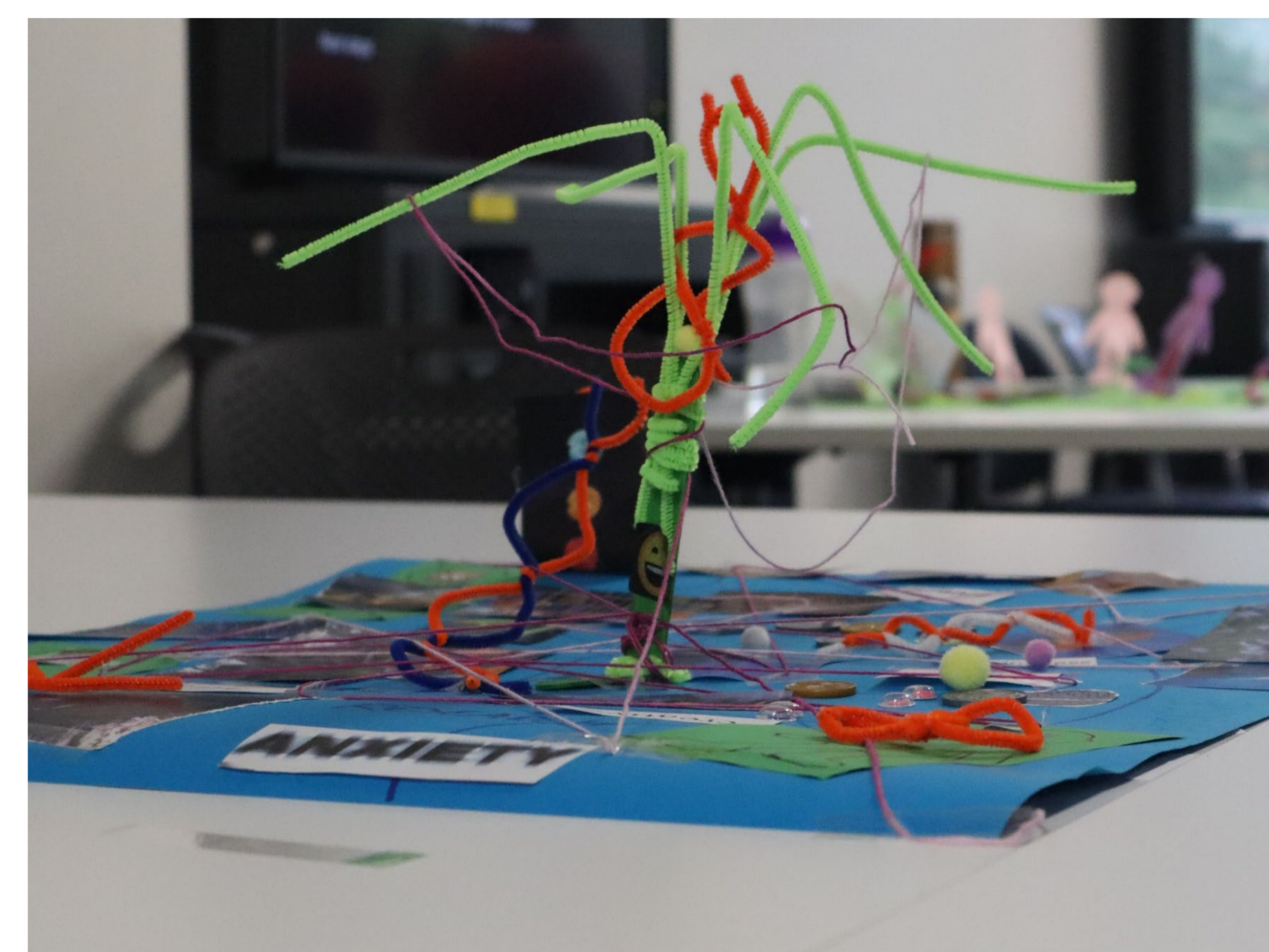
"...it's about empathy, knowledge and innovation..." – Eloise *



Continuation of person-centered genetic counselling practice



An engaged public dialogue regarding genetics and genomics



"...the reservoir of water represents knowledge and access for everyone whereas at present it's just a little fountain people go to, the only source to understand this information." – Yvette *

"The public perception of what genetics and genetic counselling is, is quite removed from reality." – Elizabeth *

Utilise the massive amount of data generated whilst ensuring security, privacy and ethical use of information



"The idea of a river to an ocean. The river is small in present, representing the river of information we know now. There is an ocean of information out there but society doesn't know about it. In the future the river has expanded with lots of connections between everyone." – Yana *

"There should be no instances where genetic information, which is very private, should be used to discriminate or to create biases in other aspects of life, in jobs, in society." – Harriet *

* Pseudonyms have been used

WHAT DID MAKING TELL US ABOUT THE FUTURE OF GENETIC COUNSELLING?

Collaborating to 'create' a shared vision for the future of the profession they are entering provided students with an emergent understanding of the skills, knowledge and professional identity they will require as genetic counsellors in a rapidly-changing profession. In the words of the students:

'We don't want genetic counselling to be something that can only be accessed by the elite. The person is the centre of it. Technology is increasing [which is] increasing our understanding [so that more] people are going to have more choices and more freedom...people are going to know about their options. We need to uphold ourselves without breaching other people's privacy or security. The future is bright and broad.'

Reference:

1 Sanders, E. and Stappers, P., 2013, *The Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research for the Front End of Design*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers. ISBN-10: 9063692846