

Meeting with supervisors, induction, and beginning

I had my first meeting with my first and second supervisors on the 23rd of September. We discussed the practical structure of a part-time PhD, the work schedule, mandatory modules, and key people and systems that will be of importance in the coming years.

One thing that stayed with me from the conversation was the reminder that I do not have to engage with my husband's material straight away. I was encouraged to protect myself from becoming overwhelmed by grief, and instead to focus for now on theory, reading, and thinking. The more sensitive material can be returned to at a later stage, if and when it feels possible.

I was also encouraged to begin building a reference list early, to hold ideas together as they emerge rather than chase them later. I received some initial suggestions for reading, which undoubtedly add to my research.

We spoke about methods, particularly autoethnography, and about the ethical and legal dimensions of working with vulnerable people. These are not abstract concerns for me. I have met with a lawyer and hold the power of attorney, which shapes how I think about responsibility, consent, and care in the research. Ethics here is not a form to be completed, but a daily practice.

My supervisors also warned me that the first year of a PhD is often destabilising. That this is normal, and even necessary. Given my situation as a carer, I was reassured that it is acceptable—and sensible—to work at a slower tempo at the beginning, focusing on reading, observing, and allowing the research to grow organically.

At present, spending time remembering together with my husband, playing the guitar, making sounds in the music studio and potentially creating Graphic Notations is a gentle and kind way of creating and spending time. I am recording fragments of everyday life and, when he feels he wants to share insights, stories, or memories, I listen and give him space. These informal interviews must always take his condition into account. These moments feel fragile yet full. Memory appears not as something retrieved, but as something enacted.

I am also becoming aware of the importance of community. Meeting peers, sharing space—even briefly—helps anchor the work and reminds me that research does not happen in isolation, and that it is rewarding and, at times, fun, as it was over a lovely dinner filled with laughter and conversation later that night. This journal will be written twice a month. I imagine it becoming a place for notes, reflections, sketches, images, references, and unfinished thoughts. Not a record of certainty, but of attention.