

2013

Returning to One Another

Easing engagement about
things that matter

A treasure trove of ideas and exercises to build
community and hold conversations that matter

A collaboration between
Centre for the Study of Violence & Reconciliation
and
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights



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Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

And

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

Deep Listening

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, this is how they greet one another:

“Mararae hare?”

Did you sleep?

“Ndarare kana mararawo.”

I slept well if you slept well

“Ndarare.”

I slept.

“Makadii?”

How are you?

“Ndiripo Madadiwo.”

I am here if you are here.

“Ndiripo”

I am here

Acknowledgements

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Inspiration for the entire learning series was drawn from a collaboration with Michelle Parlevliet who worked with Ghalib Galant and Undine Whande in the late 1990s/early 2000s in South African and continental human rights institutions and later in the context of international development practitioners encountering the nexus between Human Rights and Conflict Transformation as a key fault line to consider in their work. Michelle Parlevliet and Undine Whande facilitated one inaugural workshop on 'Facilitation Skills for Human Rights Practitioners' that contributed to the foundation of this project, process and products.

This publication brings together key insights from the Learning Series and a compilation of the exercises used during the various sessions. We would like to acknowledge

that these exercises were based on a 20-year journey of learning of the facilitators, straddling many people and many sources. We strive to acknowledge all places and persons through whom we have encountered the various exercises and concepts. Many (re)sources in the conflict transformation field are (thankfully) open source and shared widely. Where we have not acknowledged original or failed to identify the correct origins, or have attributed something to later co-creators, this is entirely our making and we apologise, having done our best to acknowledge and valuing all ancestral lineages in this professional field.

We would like to acknowledge the participants on the journey of the last two years in Zimbabwe and South Africa, drawn from 15 organisations from across the border, all active in the fields of Human Rights, Community Peacebuilding and Trauma & Healing. Without them the richness of the wisdom that lives in Zimbabwe would not have been uncovered and brought into a fruitful conversation for the region.

We want to acknowledge the efforts of the facilitation team consisting of Dr Undine Whande, Ghalib Galant, Kindiza Ngubeni and Clever Chikwanda, in holding the space for the Learning Series to take place. We want to acknowledge those co-facilitators who helped shape particular aspects and modules of the learning series:

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We would like to thank our project interns Mercy Mwaura (Kenya), Fritzi Groll (Germany) (who compiled the original Towerland Magic report) and Khaya Nkala (Zimbabwe) for their contributions.

If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.

from Keeping Still

Pablo Neruda

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The Learning Series

The series, entitled “*Spinning the Web: Exploring the Nexus between Human Rights and Conflict Transformation*”, was conceived out of the collaboration between CSVR and ZLHR and the identified need for human rights activists and lawyers to develop or deepen their facilitation skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-political environment. There was also a benefit to exploring the intersection between the fields of conflict transformation/peacebuilding and human rights with a view to seeing how they could complement each other in the field. In doing so, it was hoped:

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- 1) To contribute to broadening the skills base of practitioners to include facilitative and conversational approaches for legal practitioners
- 2) To deepen the analytical and intervention capacity of practitioners within ZLHR and HR oriented partners to explore the value of a conflict transformation lens in addition to a human rights lens;
- 3) To make room for exploring the value of human rights based knowledge and practices for peace practitioners; and
- 4) To co-create and strengthen webs of relationships within and among partner organisations and communities as a way of fostering resilience, social cohesion and contextually wise and appropriate engagement for nonviolence and peace, based on a human rights ethos.

The objectives of the Learning Series were that participants would:

- 1) Have a heightened appreciation for the interplay and nexus between human rights and conflict transformation;
- 2) Acquire and deepen analytical and facilitation skills through a conflict transformation lens;
- 3) Understand and explore the application of the approach(es) and skills within their own context;
- 4) Explore nonviolence and nonviolent strategies for social transformation and cohesion
- 5) Explore and deepen skills and approaches to community participation and mobilisation

About the Treasure Trove

This Treasure Trove contains a selection of the important substantive concepts and theoretical underpinnings of the Learning Series. It also contains some of the more important exercises done over the course of the Learning Series.

The Treasure Trove is not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, it is offered as a collection of materials which we hope will be useful in your own work. The content pieces for instance may be used as information sheets or as the basis for inputs on those topics.

The exercises are offered with detailed instructions on how they may be run. They have been drawn from our own experience as facilitators working at the nexus of human rights and conflict transformation. There may also be other ways that are more appropriate in the contexts that you work. Feedback on what works and what could be changed

would be greatly appreciated. In that way these exercises might remain living and evolving within different contexts and with different audiences in mind.



Training is getting what you want into people (skills, knowledge etc.);

Facilitation is getting what you want out of people;

Hosting is creating and holding space for emergence. It is not about what I want, but about what wants to be born in the space that we hold

Mary-Alice Arthur, Art of Hosting

About Facilitation and Facilitators

“Facilitation” comes from the Latin word *‘facilitare’*, to make easy. So a facilitator is someone who makes it easier for others to learn. In this Treasure Trove, the role of the facilitator is precisely that: to create an environment within which people can learn – both the participants and the facilitator him-/herself.

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A good facilitator

- is **sensitive** to and seeks to understand the context participants live in:
 - *Where are people coming from?*
 - *What environment do they operate in on a daily basis?*
 - *What challenges do they face in that environment?*
 - *What resources do they have at hand to operate in that environment?*
- stays **alert** to participants' context in the process
- remains **sensitive to hierarchies** and one's own subject position – watch subtleties such as your own body language
- conducts a thorough **needs assessment** before each facilitation situation (training or intervention) and plans accordingly (see Needs Assessment p.)
- is aware that training/facilitating learning is in most instances also **an intervention** into participant's lives, whether it is in an organisational or group context or as an individual – facilitation can trigger processes that may need follow-up
- **balances facilitation goal** (i.e. a learning agenda) **with the issues** participants bring into the training – stays with the group and puts participants' needs first
- wields **authority and trust** gently and seeks to create a 'safe space' for all participants
- aims for the **results** of the facilitation to be **sustainable** in the contexts into which people return

“The role of the educator is to present to the community in a challenging way the issues they are already discussing in a confused way.” **Mao ZeDong (Chairman Mao)**

Core Practices of Life -Affirming Leaders - by Margaret Wheatley

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- Here are some of the behaviours and practices of leaders who are able to nourish and evoke the best qualities in people. By doing so, these leaders affirm life's capacities to self-organize in creative, sustainable, and generous ways.
- **Know they cannot lead alone.** In these complex times, no one person is smart enough to know what to do. Many different perspectives are necessary in order to gain a fuller understanding of what is happening.
- **Have more faith in people than they do in themselves.** This is especially important in organizations and nations where people have been oppressed or told they're not capable of being creative or powerful. Leaders patiently and courageously insist on peoples' participation as the means to discover their potential and contribute to the organization.
- **Recognize human diversity as a gift, and the human spirit as a blessing.** We each see the world differently. When we share these unique perceptions, we gain a larger perspective of what's going on. And it is only our great human spirits that bless us with hope and possibility even in the worst circumstances.
- **Act on the fact that people only support what they create.** And only act responsibly for what they care about. Therefore, leaders engage people in anything that affects them. Decision-making processes expand to include more and more voices.
- **Solve unsolvable problems by bringing new voices into the room.** Systems grow healthier as they connect with those formerly excluded. New and different information changes how we define the problem, and make new solutions available.
- **Use learning as the fundamental process for resiliency, change and growth.** When reflection and learning are built in to all activities and projects, people become intelligent. We quickly find workable and innovative solutions. Without reflection, we keep repeating our mistakes.
- **Offer purposeful work as the necessary condition for people to engage fully.** When people know why they're doing their work and connect with the purpose of it, they then assume responsibility for that work. They become creative and work hard to find the most effective solutions.

The Ethics of Facilitation

Brian Auvine et al. (1978) describe the following responsibilities for facilitators:

'There are a number of ways in which the role of the facilitator can get out of hand or be used unfairly. Often this happens without either the group or the facilitator realising it. We feel that it is your responsibility to prevent abuse of your position as facilitator'.

Below is a code of responsibilities developed for facilitating processes in conflict situations based on the framework Auvine suggests. The code was developed to assist a facilitator in maintaining his/her integrity. Whilst it was developed for facilitating processes, it has much to offer facilitators of learning as well:

De-mystifying your role as facilitator

- 'It is not enough that you yourself have the values of cooperation and egalitarianism. Most people are accustomed to participating in groups where one person acts as leader and where that one person is treated as someone important, someone with special power and wisdom. Unless the group understands your role, they will probably perceive you as an authority and allow you to influence them unduly. It is important for you to come off your "pedestal" and let the group see you as "human". This is called **de-mystifying your role as facilitator**.'
- Auvine (1978: 4) writes further: 'Even though you conscientiously de-mystify your position, you may find that people depend on you. They may concede some of their powers as participants to you and look to you to make decisions, define a situation, etc.'

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Training = Teaching or Facilitating?

- As a facilitator you need to be aware at all times that your participants are bringing their own wisdom, life experiences and insights into the training situation. You are facilitating a learning experience for your participants that should link into their own experiences. You do not simply teach them what you know. Also, you need to reflect back to the group their need to take responsibility for their own learning. You cannot do it for them. In most training situations participants will get what they are willing to invest (in terms of time, energy, and personal commitment).

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Humility and Authenticity – the facilitator as learner

- *'The temptation to use the power delegated to you to fulfill your own needs (increased self-esteem, manipulation of a situation for your own benefit, even simple expedience) will be strong'* (Auvine 1978: 4).
- Humility and authenticity are qualities that will allow a facilitator to be genuinely credible and trustworthy for participants. They will dare to share more and risk exploring their own boundaries, which is often an aim in good conflict resolution training. Do not pretend that you know more than they do. Sometimes it is easy to 'shine in your own light'; the goal is to allow others to shine not to put them into your own shadow. Also, do not pretend to know more or have more experience than you actually do have. This is often a challenge to young facilitators who may feel insecure and seek to establish their 'authority' with an audience. Participants will 'smell' it a mile off if you are not genuine and you lose credibility! If you do not know something, admit it freely. See if you can find out more about the issue. You are on a learning journey with your participants and you can grow together. You can learn from them and their experiences as much as they can learn from you.

Control and Power

- *'It is your responsibility not to use facilitation techniques to control a group. A potential for abuse arises from the fact that the facilitator performs a subtle, non-directive role. The passive, friendly, well-meaning facilitator can be manipulative in ways that an aggressive, forceful leader could never get away with. The difference between a charming manipulator and a dictator may only be a matter of whether the group is conscious that they are being controlled' (Auvine 1978: 4).*

Dealing with the past

- In Southern Africa facilitator/facilitators need to be especially aware of the seemingly subtle power dynamics and 'invisible' hierarchies that spring from our history. Inevitably and in any process this legacy will emerge in some way. As a facilitator you need to be especially aware of your own historic subject position (in terms of race, class, gender, age and culture) in relation to that of your participants. Though it may be difficult acknowledging that this legacy exists and affects us is a necessary part of healing and social repair in Southern Africa.

Counseling and Therapy

- *'Being a facilitator does not mean that you are qualified to be a psychotherapist, either with a group or in a one-on-one situation. Because of the stress on human values and feelings that facilitation involves, facilitators are often seen as resources for personal psychological problems as well as for organisational problems. Therefore participants sometimes reach out to facilitators with their emotional needs. This reaching out is often a statement on the lack of resources available for people's problems rather than a comment on your skills as a therapist. Please be careful' (Auvine 1978: 4).*

Equal attention for all

- You as a facilitator cannot expect that you will meet your own emotional needs working with groups. If you use a facilitation situation to satisfy some personal desire (need for attention, respect, power, making friends, finding lovers) you cannot be doing a good job of meeting the group's needs. Often in groups people develop one-sided perceptions of one another resulting in intense interactions. Participants are also more willing to put themselves in a vulnerable position towards you (power imbalance). If you as a facilitator become particularly involved with one participant (or a small group of participants) you may neglect others, may be seen as an advocate of the one(s) you are involved with. This can be detrimental to the whole group (adapted from Auvine 1978: 4).

Transparency

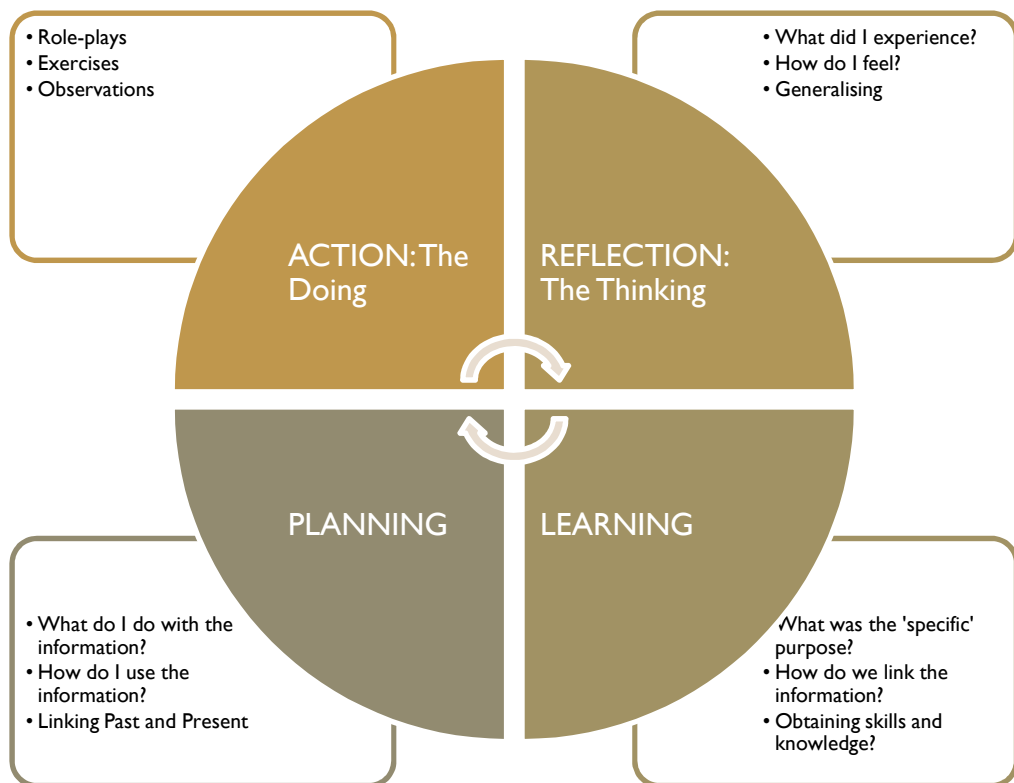
- It is the facilitator's responsibility to be sure the group understands what you are doing with them: what your goals are, how you expect to meet their needs, what you can give them and how you are going to do it. It is your responsibility to represent yourself fairly, to be open to criticism from the group and to consider altering your goals to meet the group's goals. You are there for their benefit! It is the group's right to hold you accountable for what you do with them (adapted from Auvine 1978: 4).

Finally, use the basic human skills and common sense you already have in working with groups. From time to time this will ask you to use your **intuition**. This does not always mean taking the easy way out or pursuing the most comfortable direction. As you gain experience in facilitation/training you will learn to trust an inner sense of direction in determining the best behaviour in a particular situation based on humane values and an understanding of humans as individuals in groups, whether this behaviour is comfortable or awkward, pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult. One does not simply read a book and become an effective facilitator. You need to combine **experience, feedback, observation and reflection** in order to develop competence. We have found that experience is the most effective training tool (adapted from Auvine 1978: 4).

The Learning Cycle: Action – Reflection – Learning – Planning

Kaplan (1997) says that the process of learning takes place in a “Learning Cycle”, which can be described in four phases, namely:

- ✚ the “Action Phase”,
- ✚ the “Reflection Phase”,
- ✚ the “Learning Phase”, and
- ✚ the “Planning Phase”.





ACTION:THE DOING

- ***What are we doing? What have we done? How have we done it?***
- Our subjective experiences, i.e. actions, responses, feelings, thoughts and understanding, are as essential to the gaining of real knowledge as objective facts and measurable data are.
- Understanding develops naturally from **our** experience of **our** actions - **we** know what our experiences, our actions or our perceptions of the actions of others have been.
- Action involves a measure of risk. "*Failure*" or unanticipated outcomes may occur and this could have implications for us as individuals and/or for the group concerned.
- Have there been any unexpected outcomes? How have these been handled?

REFLECTION:THINKING ABOUT THE DOING

- ***How was it? How do you feel about it? What has it brought to mind?***
- Reflection allows us to get in touch with our own experiences of whatever the action meant for us; to understand *our reality* - what is real for us.
- Make your conscious reflection and evaluation both a personal and a group activity (if appropriate). Reflection with others allows us to test what we see, understand and assume against what others see, understand and assume. It also encourages us to see the "bigger picture".
- Reflection can be structured by asking specific and searching questions, but it is also important to take cognisance of "*gut*" feelings and responses.
- Try to look at the whole range of factors that may have contributed to a particular outcome, rather than at one single cause.
- Give your reflection time - both during, and after, the training programme.

LEARNING: DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE DOING

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- ***What lessons am I learning or have I learned?***
 - Draw these learnings in a conscious way from the reflection stage.
 - The purpose of learning in this context is to provide direction for the course of future action - both for you, as an individual, and for taking this process forward. Further use of the model will enable you to improve or change the direction of any future action you decide to embark upon.
 - The learning stage may not be comfortable and often involves us having to take a good look at ourselves and our behaviours - and being prepared to make any changes that are necessary. It allows us to formulate new questions about our actions our work and ourselves.
- **Important:** Plans that do not work out or produce the action required or anticipated are just as valuable to our learning as those, which yield desired or projected outcomes.

PLANNING: USING THIS EXPERIENCE

- ***How am I going to use this experience to inform future action?***
 - The planning stage involves thinking about the future and deciding how to move towards it based on the past action, our reflections and the lessons drawn. It is the link between past learning and future action.
 - Planning may necessitate the adaptation of material that has been used already, and the gathering and organisation of new data.
 - Incorporate the design of mechanisms to evaluate the future action.
 - Planning can seldom produce a perfectly predictable result because of the variables that an unknown future brings. Be open to this.

The Student's Prayer

Don't impose on me what you know,
I want to explore the unknown
And be the source of my own discoveries.
Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery.

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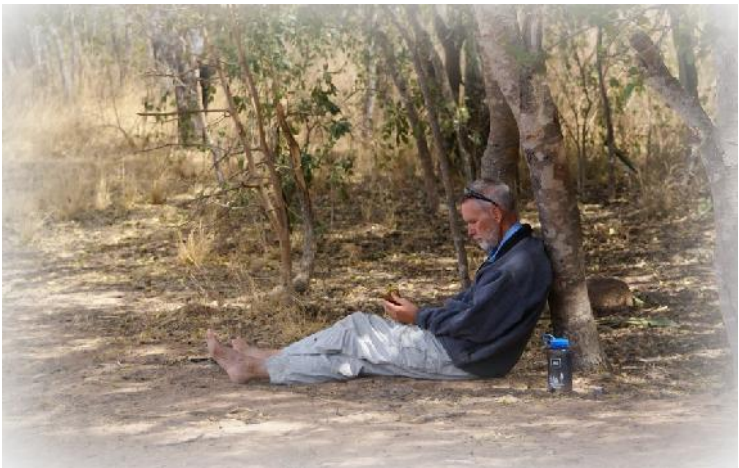
The world of your truth can be my limitation;
Your wisdom my negation.
Don't instruct me; let's walk together.
Let my richness begin where yours ends.

Show me so that I can stand
on your shoulders.
Reveal yourself so I can be
Something different.

You believe that every human being
Can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
When I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am
By listening to yourself.
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you.

Humberto Maturana



The Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter

(look at www.artofhosting.org for much more information and resources)

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Art of Hosting Methods

Each of the methodologies used as part of the Art of Hosting has a **powerful question at its core**. Crafting a good question is a challenge and creating a great one is an art. It's worth spending time on our questions because they open the door to whatever comes next. Here are some of the best known methods that the Art of Hosting uses:

CIRCLE

- The circle is the basic form underlining all other forms of participatory process. In every type of organization or group, we meet in circles (even if they are around a boardroom table) to plan for the future, handle crisis, and listen to each other. In the Art of Hosting practice we often begin and end meetings in a circle – it helps the process if participants can “check in” at the beginning about why they are participating, and “check out” at the end by reflect on what we've accomplished. Meeting in circle can be especially helpful when getting to know each other and the issue at hand, or as a means for deep reflection or consensus making.

WORLD CAFÉ

- World Café got its name because it imitates a café setting where small groups (4 or 5 people) are all conversing together around tables. In this case, a cluster of small groups – anywhere from 10 to 1000 – are in conversation about an issue that matters to them or some work they are trying to do together. It is an ideal way to find out what a community is thinking and feeling about a topic. After the first conversation, someone stays at the table as ‘host’, while the others move to a new table, taking their previous conversations with them. In this way, the threads of the various conversations are woven together and all of us get a sense of what is being discovered and developed between us

OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

- When we want to harness the power of a group – especially a diverse one with many interests and skills – to meet a present challenge, Open Space Technology is the method we choose. Whenever we need the contribution and innovative genius of everyone – because a competitor has just entered the market, or we need to drastically overhaul our operations, or there is a crisis at the manufacturing plant, or we want to break down the silos within the business, or our community needs to create a strategic plan for its future. Convened around a core calling question, the group is made aware of any givens – budget, leadership, etc. – and then the space is opened for anyone to pose a session topic. Over the course of the meeting, people are free to choose which session(s) they most want to attend, bringing maximum enthusiasm and commitment for conversation and action. Personal buy-in and committed action can be achieved in a remarkably short time.

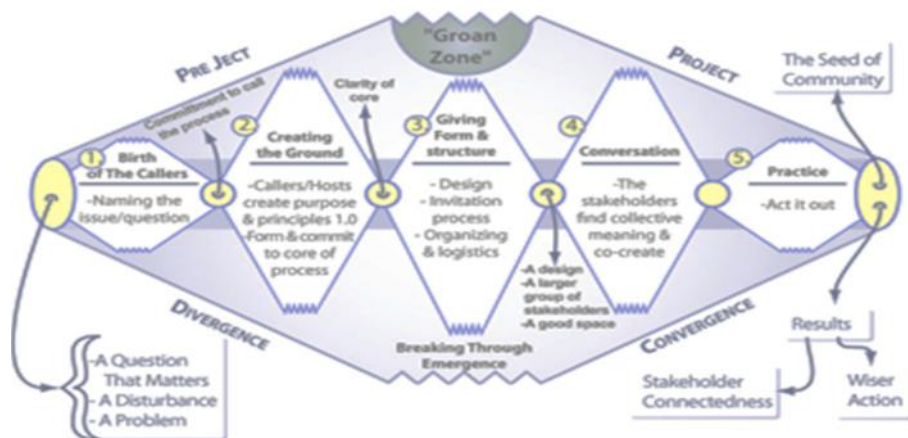
APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

- Instead of taking a problem-solving approach, Appreciative Inquiry offers a possibility focus, a move from “what is” to “what could be”. Based on a powerful, affirmative question, people interview each other to uncover experiences that resemble what we want to create. For example, if the challenge is teams not working well together, we might inquire into times when teams have been both collaborative and successful at the same time. Such experiences hold the keys to how we might bring about the future we’re visioning. In the Art of Hosting, we use Appreciative Inquiry to tap into the latent capabilities of the group to create the success they’re seeking.

And more

- **The Art of Hosting is always evolving**, bringing in complementary methods and creating new methods that further enhance the quality of conversations we host.
- Some of the other methods we use are:
 - Action learning
 - Collective mind-mapping
 - Collective Story Harvest
 - ProAction Café
 - Graphic Facilitation

5 Breaths of Design



Hosting in a Hurry – A Toolkit for putting the Art of Hosting into practice:

A quick reference for convening conversations that matter.

(Chris Corrigan)

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All conversations are opportunities for us to connect a little deeper with one another. In the Art of Hosting practice we often talk of the four fold way and the seven little helpers: the simplest tools for convening any conversation.

By far most of the conversations we host in our lives at work or in the community are conversations with small groups. These simple processes are offered as quick reference for bringing depth and life to those conversations.

The Four Fold Way of Hosting

We have learned that quality conversations leading to close team work and wise action arise when there are four conditions present:

1. Be Present
2. Participate and practice conversations
3. Host
4. Co-create

We call these four conditions the Four Fold Way of Hosting, because you can practice these [at] any time. They form the basis for all good hosting.

Be Present

*...host yourself first - be willing to sit in the chaos - keep
the space open - sit in the fire of the present...*

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Being present means showing up, undistracted, prepared, clear about the need and what your personal contribution can be. It allows you to check in with yourself and develop the personal practice of curiosity about the outcomes of any gathering. Presence means making space to devote a dedicated time to working with others. If you are distracted, called out or otherwise located in many different places, you cannot be present in one. For meetings to have deep results, every person in the room should be fully present.

Questions to help you become present:

What am I curious about?

Where am I feeling anxiety coming into this meeting and how can I let that go?

What clarity do I need?

What clarity do I have?

Collectively, it is good practice to become present together as a meeting begins. This might be as simple as taking a moment of silence to rest into the present. If an Elder is present, a prayer does this very nicely. Invite a collective slowing down so that all participants in a meeting can be present together

Participate and practice conversation

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...be willing to listen fully, respectfully, without judgement and thinking you already know all the

answers – practice conversation mindfully...

Practicing conversation

Listen and help others to list

Use silence

Contribute to the harvest

Put good questions in the centre

Connect ideas

Conversation is an art, it is not just talk. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in the service of the whole. Curiosity and judgement cannot live together in the same space. If we are judging what we are hearing, we cannot be curious about the outcome, and if we have called a meeting because we are

uncertain of the way forward, being open is a key skill and capacity. Only by practising skilful conversation can we find our best practice together.

If we practice conversation mindfully we might slow down meetings so that wisdom and clarity can work quickly. When we talk mindlessly, we don't allow space for the clarity to

arise. The art of conversation is the art of slowing down to speed up.

Host conversations

...be courageous, inviting and willing to initiate conversations that matter - find and host powerful questions with the stakeholders – and then make sure you harvest the answers, the patterns, insights learnings and wise actions...

Hosting conversations is both more and less than facilitating. It means taking responsibility for creating and holding the container in which a group of people can do their best work together. You can create this container using the seven helpers as starting points, and although you can also do this in the moment, the more preparation you have the better.

The bare minimum to do is to discern the need, prepare a question and know what you will do with the harvest. If there is no need to meet, don't meet. If there is a need

Hosting basics

Determine the need and the purpose

Create a powerful question

Host an appropriate process

Encourage contributions

Harvest

get clear on the need and prepare a process that will meet that need by asking a powerful question. And always know how you will harvest and what will be done with that harvest, to ensure that results are sustainable and the effort was worth it.

Hosting conversations takes courage and it takes a bit of certainty and faith in your people. We sometimes give short shrift to conversational spaces because of the fear we experience in stepping up to host. It is, however, a gift to host a group and it is a gift to be hosted well. Work in meetings becomes that much better.

Co-create

...be willing to co-create and co-host with others, blending your knowing, experience and practices with theirs, and working in partnership.

The fourth practice is about showing up in a conversation without being a spectator, and contributing to the collective effort to sustain results. The best conversations arise when we listen for what is in the middle, what is arising out of the centre of our collaboration. It is not about the balancing of individual agendas, it is about

Co-creation

Speak truth

Speak for what is in the middle

Offer what you can

Ask for what you need

Commit to what you can
Let go

finding out what is new. And when that is discovered work unfolds beautifully when everyone is clear about what they can contribute to the work. This is how results become sustainable over time – they fall into the network of relationships that arise from a good conversation, from friends working together.

So contribute what you know to the mix so that patterns may become clear and the collaborative field can produce unexpected and surprising results.

The Seven Helpers

Over the years, we have identified seven little tools that are the source of good conversational design. At the bare minimum, if you use these tools, conversations will grow deeper and work will occur at a more meaningful level.

These seven helpers bring form to fear and uncertainty and help us stay in the chaos of not knowing the answers. They help us to move through uncomfortable places together, like conflict, uncertainty, fear and the groan zone and to arrive at wise action.

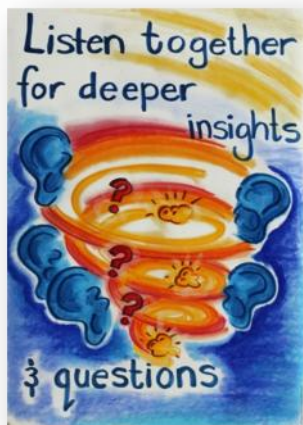
1. Be present
2. Have a good question
3. Use a talking piece
4. Harvest
5. Make a wise decision
6. Act
7. Stay together

1. Be Present

Inviting presence is a core practice of hosting, but it is also a key practice for laying the ground-work for a good meeting. There are many ways of bringing a group to presence, including:

- ✚ Start with a prayer
- ✚ Start with a moment of silence
- ✚ Check in with a personal question related to the theme of the meeting
- ✚ Pass a talking piece and provide space for each voice to be heard
- ✚ Start well. Start slowly. Check everyone in.

2. Have a good question



A good question is aligned with the need and purpose of the meeting and invites us to go to another level. Good questions are put into the centre of a circle and the group speaks through them. Having a powerful question at the centre keeps the focus on the work and helps a groups stay away from unhelpful behaviours like personal attacks, politics and closed minds.

A good question has the following characteristics:

- ✚ *Is simple and clear*
- ✚ *Is thought provoking*

- ✚ *Generates energy*
- ✚ *Focuses inquiry*
- ✚ *Challenges assumptions*
- ✚ *Opens new possibilities*
- ✚ *Evokes more questions*

It is wise to design these questions beforehand and make them essential pieces of the invitation for others to join you. As you dive into these questions, harvest the new questions that are arising. They represent the path you need to take.

3. Use a talking piece

In its simplest form a talking piece is simply an object that passes from hand to hand. When one is holding the piece, one is invited to speak and everyone is invited to listen.



Using a talking piece has the powerful effect of ensuring that every voice is heard and it sharpens both speech and

listening. It slows down a conversation so that when things are moving too fast, or people begin speaking over one another and the listening stops, a talking piece restores calm and smoothness. Conducting the opening round of a conversation with a talking piece sets the tone for the meeting and helps people to remember the power of this simple tool.

Of course a talking piece is really a minimal form of structure. Every meeting should have some form of structure that helps to work with the chaos and order that is needed to co-discover new ideas. There are many forms and processes to choose from but it is important to align them with the nature of living systems if innovation and wisdom is to arise from chaos and uncertainty.

At more sophisticated levels, when you need to do more work, you can use more formal processes that work with these kinds of context. Each of these processes has a sweet spot, its own best use, that you can think about as you plan meetings. Blend as necessary.

Process	Requirements	Best uses
Appreciative Inquiry	At least 20 minutes per person for interviews, with follow up time to process together. Can be done anywhere.	Discovering what we have going for us and figuring out how to use those assets in other places.
Circle	A talking piece and a space free of tables that can hold the group in a circle.	For reflecting on a question together, when no one person knows the answer. The basis for all good conversations.
Open Space Technology	A room that can hold the whole group in a circle, a blank wall, at at least an hour per session. You have to let go of outcomes for this to realize its full power.	For organizing work and getting people to take responsibility for what they love. Fastest way to get people working on what matters.
World Cafe	Tables or work spaces, enough to hold three to four at each, with paper and markers in the middle. You need 15 to 20 minutes per round of conversation and at least two rounds to get the full power. People need to change tables each round so ideas can travel.	For figuring out what the whole knows. World Cafe surfaces the knowledge that is in the whole, even knowledge that any given individual doesn't know is shared.

4. Harvest

Never meet unless you plan to harvest your learnings. The basic rule of thumb here is to remember that you are not planning a meeting; you are instead planning a harvest. Know what is needed and plan the process accordingly. Harvests don't always have to be visible; sometimes you plan to meet just to create learning. But support that personal learning with good questions and practice personal harvesting.

To harvest well, be aware of four things:

-  **Create an artefact.** Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Make a mind map, draw pictures, take notes, but whatever you do create a record of you take notes, but whatever you do create a record of your conversation.
-  **Have a feedback loop.** Artefacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how you will use your harvest before you begin your meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.
-  **Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest.** Harvest answers to the specific questions you are asking, but also make sure you are paying attention to the cool stuff that is emerging in good conversations. There is real value in what's coming up that none could anticipate. Harvest it.
-  **The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned.** Don't just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the

harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out post it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Use your creative spirit to find ways to have the group host their own harvest.

5. Make a wise decision

If your meeting needs to come to a decision, make it a wise one. Wise decisions emerge from conversation, not voting. The simplest way to arrive at a wise decision to use the “**three thumbs**” consensus process. It works like this:

-  First, clarify a proposal. A proposal is a suggestion for how something might be done. Have it worded and written and placed in the centre of the circle. Poll the group asking each person to offer their thumb in three positions. **UP** means “*I’m good with it.*” **SIDEWAYS** means “*I need more clarity before I give the thumbs up*”. **DOWN** means “*this proposal violates my integrity...I mean seriously.*”
-  As each person indicates their level of support for the proposal, note the down and sideways thumbs.
-  Go to the down thumbs first and ask: “*what would it take for you to be able to support this proposal?*”
-  Collectively help the participant word another proposal, or a change to the current one. If the process is truly a consensus building one, people are allowed to vote thumbs down only if they are willing to participate in making a proposal that works. Hijacking a group gets rewarded with a vote. Majority rules.
-  Once you have dealt with the down thumbs, do the same with the sideways thumbs. Sideways doesn't

mean “no” but rather “I need clarity.” Answer the questions or clarify the concerns.

If you have had a good conversation leading to the proposal, you should not be surprised by any down thumbs. If you are, reflect on that experience and think about what you could have done differently.

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6. Act.

Once you have decided what to do, act. There isn't much more to say about that except that wise action is action that doesn't not over-extend or under-extend the resources of a group. Action arises from the personal choice to responsibility for what you love. Commit to the work and do it.

7. Stay together

Relationships create sustainability. If you stay together as friends, mates or family, you become accountable to one another and you can face challenges better. When you feel your relationship to your closest mates slipping, call it out and host a conversation about it. Trust is a group's most precious resource. Use it well.

Resources for hosting

Baldwin, Christina. *Calling the Circle: The first and future culture*

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Kaner, Sam et. al. *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*

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Acknowledgements

The above guide was written by **Chris Corrigan** for the Vancouver Island Aboriginal Transition Team based on material developed by the Art of Hosting practitioner's community. It would not have been possible without the wisdom, friendship and inspiration of Monica Nissen, Toke Moeller, Kris Archie, Tenneson Woolf, Teresa Posakony, Tim Merry, Phil Cass, Tuesday Ryan-Hart, Caitlin Frost, David Stevenson, Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea – all of them wise and wonderful stewards and practitioners of the Art of Hosting.

The Art and Architecture of Powerful Questions – Eric E Vogt



"The important thing is to never stop questioning."

Albert Einstein

Einstein invites us to continue questioning. Why? This query provokes a variety of impassioned responses:

- Questions are a prerequisite to learning.
- Questions are a window into creativity and insight.
- Questions motivate fresh thinking.
- Questions challenge outdated assumptions.
- Questions lead us to the future.

In fact, with little effort, it is easy to justify the critical role of questions in the development of human knowledge. Nobel laureates will often attribute their experience of successful scientific achievement to asking the right questions.

And in much simpler business situations, we have all experienced the importance of asking the "right question." Indeed, if questions are so critical to the capacity to create and the development of human knowledge, we wonder why our public educational system focuses upon memorization and static answers rather than the art of questioning. In contrast to the typical western education, the distinguished Chilean biologist, Humberto Maturana, was recently asked how his schooling influenced his innovative thinking. He replied that he had attended an experimental high school in

Santiago where half of their grade was based upon the quality of the student's questions, not their answers.

The Corporate Learning Conference dialogue focused upon the **art and architecture of powerful questions**. We started by attempting to define a "powerful question," and by considering several examples:

- *What time is it?*
- *How do you make strawberry ice cream?*
- *What does it mean to be human at this point in history?*

Clearly, these three questions differ in terms of power. But how do we describe the difference? And what is the art and architecture of a powerful question? Our prolific dialogue group offered several diagnostics:

A powerful question...

-  stimulates reflective thinking.
-  challenges assumptions.
-  is thought-provoking.
-  generates energy and a vector to explore.
-  channels inquiry, promises insight.
-  is broad and enduring.
-  touches a deeper meaning.
-  evokes more questions.

Satisfied that we had a working definition of a *powerful question*, the dialogue group turned its attention to the art and architecture -- HOW does one ask a powerful question? One dimension of power clearly must have to do with the

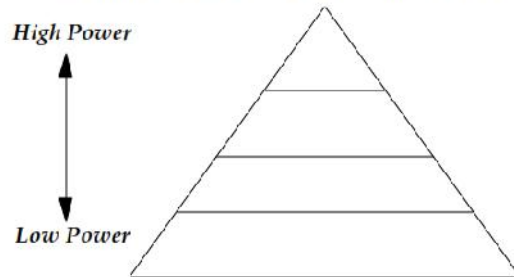
linguistic architecture alone. Operating independently of the meaning and scope of a question is the language structure which holds the question. We know, for instance, that salespeople observed decades ago that "open-ended" questions were much more powerful for stimulating a sales dialogue than "closed-ended" questions. *"Do you have any problems with your fax machine?"* tends to yield fewer selling opportunities than *"What problems have you experienced with your fax machine?"*

There are exceptions to every rule. We must keep in mind that in the example above, we are describing a consultative selling process where the objective is to stimulate reflective thinking by probing for needs and concerns. When the context changes to closing a sale, a question like, "Can I write up your order now?" is clearly an **important** closed-ended question, while it may not be a powerful question, as defined above.

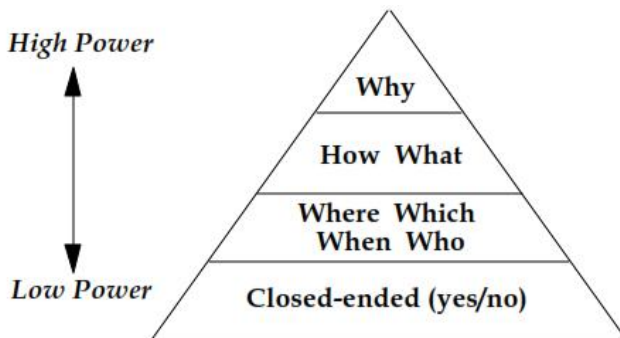
This open/closed distinction can be expanded into a richer hierarchy of power through systematically exploring the linguistic architecture of questions. In an exercise MicroMentor first designed for Polaroid's Creativity Lab, participants discover the basic linguistic architecture of questions when they are asked to place the following words into a pyramid of low to high power:

WHO WHERE WHEN WHY
 HOW WHAT WHICH

The Linguistic Architecture of Powerful Questions



Most groups working on this dimension of linguistic architecture produce a variant of the following general hierarchy:



The general thesis is that virtually any question can be converted into a more powerful question by moving up the pyramid. As an example, consider the following sequence:

- *Are you feeling okay?*
- *Where does it hurt?*
- *How are you feeling in general?*
- *Why do you suppose you aren't feeling well?*

As we move from the simple yes/no question towards the why question, you probably notice that the questions tend to motivate more reflective thinking, and are generally more "powerful."

There are refinements within this dimension of linguistic architecture available to an interested practitioner. For instance, using the conditional tense rather than the present tense will often invite greater reflective speculation:

What can we do? seems to offer fewer possibilities than...
What could we do?

The dialogue group concluded that clearly one dimension which defines a powerful question is this linguistic architecture. However, other factors are also at play when we consider the relative power of the following two questions:

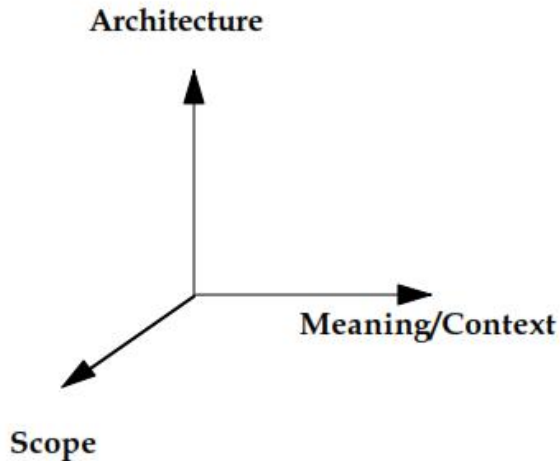
- *Why is my coat unbuttoned?*
- *Where can we find spiritual peace?*

This is an instance where most people would say that the "where" question has somewhat greater power than the "why" question. After reflection, we hypothesized that there

were probably three dimensions which define a powerful question:

Three Dimensions of Powerful Questions

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The Scope Dimension of Questions

The "scope" dimension suggests that questions which encompass more people, more volume, more time, or more concerns have greater scope, and tend to be more powerful questions. An example might be the following contrast:

- *How should we manage our sales force?*
- *How should we manage the planet?*

In this example, the question increases in scope and the implied "we" increases in scope as the object changes from sales force to planet.

The Meaning/Context Dimension of Questions

The "meaning/context" dimension is a more complex, subtle axis and commanded the attention of the group for most of the dialogue. One way of defining the meaning/context axis is to return to our definition of a powerful question, and highlight the characteristics which describe the meaning/context axis. Questions which are powerful in terms of meaning/context probably exhibit the characteristics shown in bold type below:

A powerful question...

- stimulates reflective thinking.
- challenges assumptions.
- is thought-provoking.
- generates energy and a vector to explore.
- channels inquiry, promises insight.
- is broad and enduring.
- touches a deeper meaning.
- evokes more questions.

It became clear during our exploration that an understanding of the nature of the interaction between questions and assumptions is critical to a full appreciation of powerful questions. Understanding the role of assumptions in questioning may be, in particular, a key to gaining greater insight into the meaning/context dimension of powerful questions.

We observed that questions which challenge or alter assumptions have the power to shift context and change mind-sets. In the three-dimensional model, these questions would naturally locate themselves further to the right (higher power) on the context/meaning axis. An example might serve to elaborate this dimension. Compare the two questions:

- *How can we compete with the Japanese?*
- *How can we collaborate with the Japanese?*

The second question shifts the context, and opens up a different exploration and a different set of subsequent questions. We hypothesized that the art of reframing questions as practiced in fields such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) must implicitly be operating on this axis of meaning/context as well.

Developing the conscious ability to articulate more powerful questions along this dimension may hopefully become one of the more popular courses in the transformed public education system of the next century.

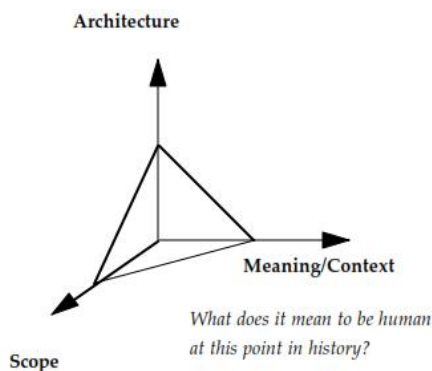
Our final exploration led us through an examination of what happens to assumptions through the incisive articulation of powerful questions. Borrowing on the computer model of **Create, Read, Update, and Delete**, we decided that questions may have one of the following four impacts upon assumptions:

Create**Reinforce****Alter****Destroy**

The order of these verbs may reflect the power of the question. For instance, it is much easier to reinforce someone's prevailing assumption than it is to alter it.

Similarly, it is generally easier to create a new assumption than destroy an existing assumption. Therefore, as we explore the nature of powerful questions, we might ask, "How does this question interact with the listeners' assumptions?"

If the answer is that it alters or destroys the listener's prevailing assumptions, we have identified a more "powerful question." Returning to our model of powerful questions and our sample high power question, we might map the question onto the model somewhat like this:



Models have value only if they provide insight and lead to different actions. I invite the reader to play with the three-dimensional model of powerful questions offered above.

Start with the blank model below and map the following three questions:

- *What time is it?*
- *How could we make the world's best strawberry ice cream?*
- *How can we bring meaning to our work?*

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Then attempt to increase the power of each question by changing first its architecture, then its scope, and finally its meaning/context. This is the art of powerful questions.



A Note on Harvestingⁱ

The Art of Harvesting is a way to bring the Art of Hosting into its fruition.

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1. Preparing the field

- ✚ The quality of the field – determines the quality of the yield.
- ✚ In preparing the field – sending out the call, giving the context, inviting etc.– you set the tone of the whole process – the seriousness and quality with which you determine the quality of what you reap.
- ✚ In other words – you start to think about the harvest from the very beginning – not as an afterthought.

2. Planning the harvest

- ✚ Planning the harvest starts with and follows the design process.
- ✚ A clear purpose and some success-criteria for the process or the harvest itself – will add clarity and direction.
- ✚ What you harvest is determined by what you sow.
- ✚ In sowing the seeds – identifying and asking the strategic and meaningful questions – that will drive the inquiry – you determine the out-put.
So in planning the harvest – ask yourself – what is it that this process needs to yield – what is the information, the ideas or the out-put that will benefit you here and now – or what may take you to the next level of inquiry.

“What question if answered would shift us to the next level?”

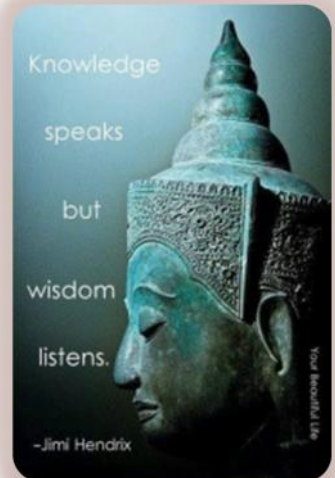
- ✚ Even though the process of harvesting starts with preparing the field and the planning – the process itself is an on-going process.
- ✚ With each part of the process you harvest something. – Some of it you need to use right away - to help lead you into the next process. – Some of the harvest you will need later.
- ✚ So part of planning the harvest – is also to know for whom, when and how you need to use it. Another part of the planning is asking yourself in which format will the harvest serve you the best? – Are there templates – sheets – colors - drawings etc. that can be used as aids in the harvesting.

3. Picking the fruits: Recording – or creating a collective memory

- ✚ The simplest way to harvest is to record – what is being said, done, the out-put of the conversations etc.
- ✚ This creates a record or collective memory.
- ✚ Recording can be done in words:
 - your notes – which will be subjective
 - transcripts of output produced in conversations or from tapes etc. which will be objective.
- ✚ Recording can also be done with pictures / photographs. Pictures “remember” or “recall” feelings, atmospheres, situations.
- ✚ It is helpful to give some thought in the planning phase to how you want to harvest – what kind of records, templates etc. will help you gather the relevant information or knowledge

4. Preparing and processing the fruits: Creating collective meaning and value

- ✚ Creating a memory is the first step.
- ✚ Making collective sense and meaning is the second step. – This is like adding value – or making the data useful.
- ✚ There are many ways of making sense and meaning – the general idea is to go from loads of bits of information to “holons” or from bubbles to dots.
There are several ways to help in this process:
 - *Harvest in a “systemic way” – ask collectively – “what did you notice, what gave sense and meaning to you? – what triggered you? etc. – Notice the patterns! – The patterns indicate what is emerging!*
 - *Metaphors – are ways of making complex issues simple*
 - *So are Mental models*
 - *Story*
 - *Graphic renderings – drawings – make complex issues manageable – visible*



5. Planning the next harvest: Feeding forward

- ✚ Most of the harvest is done to bring closure or bring us to the next level of understanding – and more importantly – knowing it collectively – seeing the same picture and sharing the same understanding together. These are the fruits of the harvest.
- ✚ So as you harvest – you may look back and ask – what did we learn? – what did we understand? – where are we now in the journey?
- ✚ You may also look forward – look for the issues or questions that you know will feed the next inquiry – and feed them back into the system.

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A few more comments:

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- ✚ The above is mostly reflecting on the collective harvesting.
- ✚ Individual reflection and harvest – will raise the level of the collective harvest.
In learning-processes this can be done intentionally – by using a journal as a learning tool.
- ✚ Web based tools open up a whole world of possibilities that are not dealt with here.
- ✚ Harvesting the “soft” is much more subtle and subjective than dealing with the “cognitive” or more hard core parts.
- ✚ A qualitative inquiry into what we have noticed, what has shifted – or changed in our relationships, in the culture or atmosphere etc. may give us some information about the softer part of the harvest.

In all beginnings

And all endings

be careful!

- *Tao Te Ching*

Contemplation Exercises

It is important from time to time to allow for some opportunity for participants to reflect on the learnings that they have made. This can be done in different ways – from holding a short silence to let the import of comment or insight to sink in to individual or small group exercises that encourage participants to delve beneath the surface meaning.

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Out of the Learning Series, a group of participants responded in the following way to the question: “Why do we use contemplative practices? What is the yield?”:

-  *They connect us to what really is*
-  *They connect me to myself*
-  *They connect me with my longing, with what I really want*
-  *They bring in an element of something new, unfamiliar, strange (so I wake up)*
-  *They connect us to a greater power*
-  *They create depth, warmth and connection*
-  *They connect me to my question*
-  *They allow for deep reflection*
-  *I can relate myself to the situation*
-  *They give freedom to explore, freedom to release, freedom to know in another way*
-  *They allow us to see the bigger picture, the quest*

✚ *They connect me to my vision*

✚ *They clarify and connect to intention*

"When confronted with a situation that appears fragmented or impossible, step back, close your eyes, and envision perfection where you saw brokenness.

Go to the inner place where there is no problem, and abide in the consciousness of well-being."

~ Alan Cohen ~

Journaling as reflective practice

By Desiree Paulsen of the Community Development
Resource Association

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Journals and diaries have been used ever since people could find ways of capturing their thoughts and ideas. Many people have used it as a deeply personal process, others to capture important moments and events in their lives. Journals can also be used as part of a conscious practice of reflecting and learning. As development practitioners, often we are very action oriented and may not always make time to capture or document through writing. Our work may already be consumed with many other writing tasks like field reports, developing materials and donor reports and the thought of starting a journal may seem like an indulgence. If we can begin to see journaling as part of a reflective practice and not an indulgence we can begin an exciting self-directed learning process.

Journals can become an important reflective tool for practitioners who want to become more conscious of how they practice. The advantage of a journal is that we can be completely open and honest, and we don't have to worry about how we write since journals should be private and for the writer's eyes only. This provides potential for enormous learning and growth since when one looks back over a journal you are able to see yourself through your own eyes, in a sense it is a mirror, a silent ever listening friend and confidante. We are able to then start to see areas where we

may be repeating the same patterns of behaviour which may land us in the same situation each time or we may become warmly affirmed when we see how our good qualities may have helped certain situations. We may also begin to see how events and people play pivotal roles in our lives. We may also become extremely creative as we write knowing our writing will not be edited, critiqued or evaluated.

Journals can be used in a number of ways:

Free writing – this involves just writing our thoughts when we feel moved to do so. This freedom allows us to write without constraint and we may be amazed by what emerges when we give ourselves permission to just let the pen flow and see what happens.

In the field – as part of a work process, possibly at the beginning or end of each intervention, we may record our thoughts, feelings, learnings. When we look back over a period of time, we may be able to see patterns and trends and start to understand our work and ourselves better. We will also have a personal record of how we felt and acted in various interventions, helping us to do things differently when we encounter similar situations. Recording our questions from our practice allows us to begin to work with them. It is helpful to record ideas and tools as they emerge, building up a personal practitioner toolkit.

During learning programmes – participants in learning programmes are given a journal to use throughout a programme. The facilitator may at first begin by providing relevant questions for the participant to use as a guide for journal entry. It is important that the facilitator create a dedicated quiet space for journaling to happen. Facilitators themselves can keep a journal throughout the process and record at the same time as participants, or create another space to journal. This helps to make the facilitator more conscious of the process and what is happening to the participants as individuals and as a group.

How to make journaling a more conscious process

It is useful, once one has written over a significant period like a few months, to pause and go back over a journal and begin to highlight patterns or trends, thus allowing us to see ourselves over a period – through this process of reflection it becomes evident where our challenges may lie or where we need to enhance, improve or change. We may also see where the gaps are and where we could need help and support. By recording questions which we have about our lives or our practice, they can act as an ongoing guide to give direction to our learning. Learning thus becomes our personal ongoing responsibility.

The purposes of writing journals

Jennifer. A. Moon (1999), in her book, “Reflection in Learning and Professional Development” writes about the use of journals (page 186 – 202). Below are purposes of writing journals which she outlines:

- o To record experience – with the emphasis initially being put on the recording rather than the reflective activity, although this may come later
- o To develop learning in ways that enhances other learning – writing a journal can, for example, encourage the valuing of personal observation and knowledge
- o To deepen the quality of learning, in the form of critical thinking or developing a questioning attitude
- o To enable the learner to understand their own learning process
- o To facilitate learning from experience
- o To increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning
- o To increase the ability to reflect and improve the quality of learning
- o To enhance problem solving skills
- o As a means of assessment in formal education

Also

- o To enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice
- o To explore the self, personal constructs of meaning and understand one's view of the world
- o To enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment
- o For therapeutic purposes or as means of supporting behaviour change
- o As a means of slowing down learning, taking more thorough account of a situation or situations
- o To enhance creativity by making better use of intuitive understanding
- o To free-up writing and the representation of learning

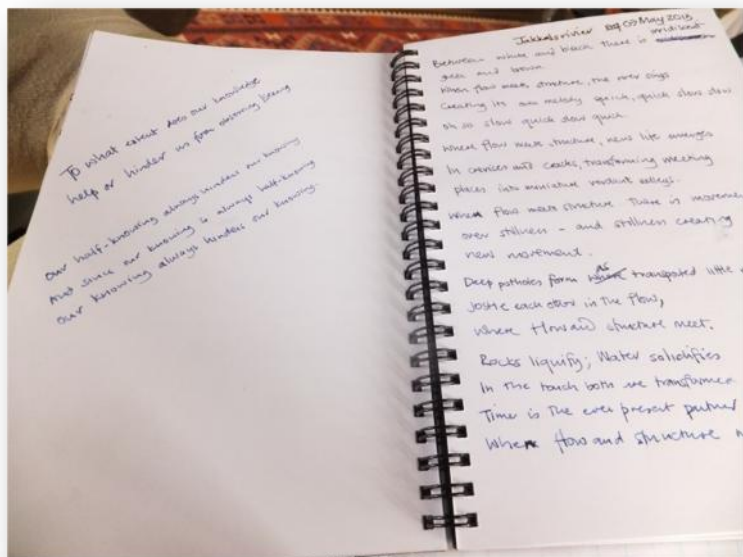
- o To provide an alternative voice for those not good at expressing themselves

To foster reflective and creative interaction in a group

In conclusion

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My own experiences of journaling have shown me that it can be a powerful cathartic and purging process. It can also be enormously energising and release new life and innovation. Finally it can be incredibly grounding and satisfying and become a constant companion in a complex world!



A few contemplative exercises

Mindfulness

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Just This Breathⁱⁱ

[Left-click to listen or right-click to download this mp3 file to your computer](#) (6:58, 6.5 MB)

Much of the emotional distress people experience is the result of thinking about upsetting things that have already happened or anticipating negative events that have yet to occur. Distressing emotions such as anger, anxiety, guilt, and sadness are much easier to bear if you only focus on the present - on each moment one at a time. These are exercises to increase your mindfulness of the present moment so that you can clear away thoughts about past and future events.

This script is used by permission from Georgia Southern University Counseling Center

Background music is from "[digifishmusic](#)" on [The FreeSound Project](#)

Editing by Martin Grant

Guided Relaxation Exerciseⁱⁱⁱ

Please take a moment to loosen your clothing. Take your shoes off and find a comfortable seat.

Imagine you are in a green forest. As you listen to the music and the nature sounds, relax and unwind allowing your body to soften.

Take a few deep breaths and start to imagine what it would be like to actually be there in the forest now. Imagine the feeling of the wind, the sun on your face, the ground beneath your feet.

When you are ready, close your eyes and allow your imagination to conjure up images of you being in this place. Allow the music and the nature sounds to relax you even more and to reinforce the sensation of really being there. Absorb yourself in the experience, but don't try to force images.

Notice how much the music and the nature sounds enhance the experience for you.

After 5 minutes or so, the music will fade away, but stay in this place for as long as you like. There are no demands on you at this time. Simply enjoy your imagined surroundings and relax in the knowledge that you are far away from the stresses of the world.

Remember . . . there is no right or wrong way to do this. Sometimes you will relax instantly, whereas at other times it may take you a few minutes. Sometimes you'll experience vivid imagery appearing in your mind and at other times you may only get a vague sense of being in the place you imagine. The important thing is to stay with the experience, and if your mind begins to latch back onto your worldly concerns, simply let those thoughts go and bring your awareness back to your imagined surroundings.

Guided Visualisation

Nourishment from the Past^{iv}

[Left-click to listen or right-click to download this mp3 file to your computer](#) (5:41, 5.3 MB)

This Five-Finger exercise was developed by Dr. David Cheek as a way to achieve deep relaxation and peace, while simultaneously affirming your human worth. All you have to do is imagine four scenes from your past—using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (touch) images. It's simple, it's pleasurable, and it works.

This script is from an unknown source

Background music is from ["ERH" on The FreeSound Project](#)

Editing by Martin Grant

An exercise that includes a guided visualisation is “Carefronting” below:

Carefronting^v

The purpose of this exercise is to explore being in right relationship with others, and how to speak truth in love. Participants explore how to be honest and open in difficult matters without using that openness as a weapon.

The exercise below can also be used as an exercise in assertiveness. The exercise will take around 1hr15mins

Process

Introductory Talk (5mins)

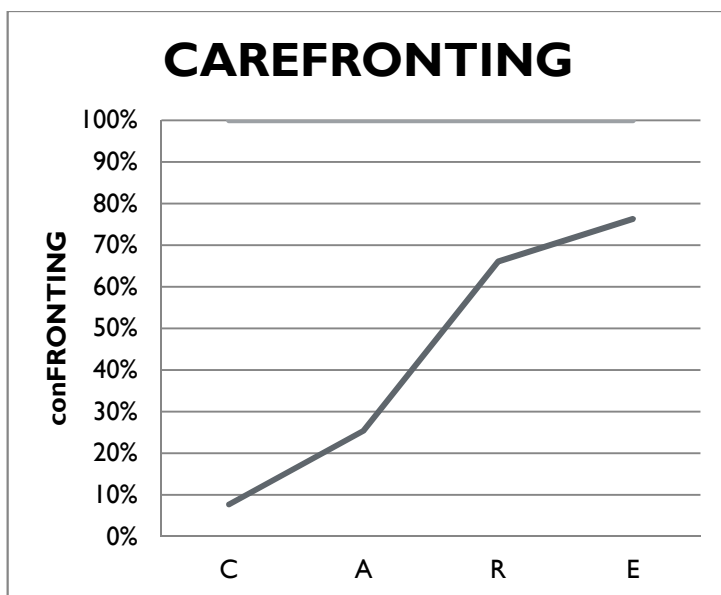
Truth and love are intrinsically related. The Latin word for the unity of truth and love is “*agape*” (ah-gah-pay). The

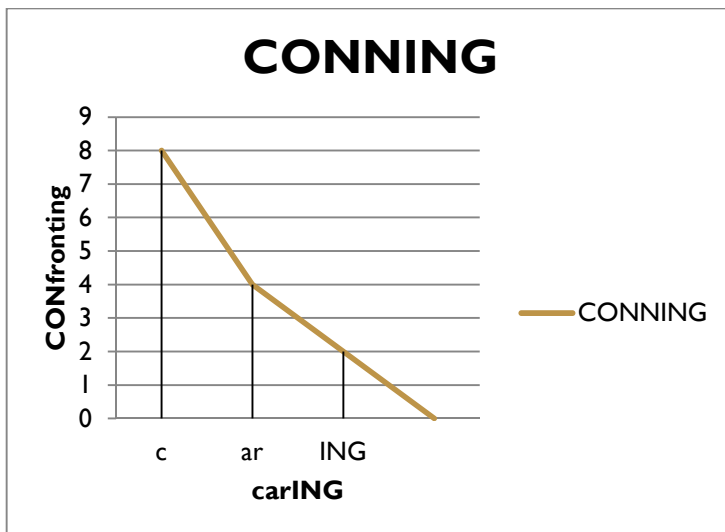
Abrahamic traditions teach that truth/knowledge is for the sake of bringing everyone into the experience of oneness in love. Buddhism teaches that compassion/love is for the sake of bringing everyone to the experience of wisdom or “*gnosis*” (the knowledge of the spiritual mysteries). The difference is clearly only one of emphasis.

Carefronting is a way of being in relationship, of speaking the Truth in Love, of combining caring and confronting.

CONfronting is merely putting heads together.

CAREfronting is doing so with a loving attitude (hearts together). The opposite of **carefronting** is **conning**: neither caring nor confronting.





Part I: Meaning of “Confront”

(15-20mins)

One sure sign of caring is listening – not giving advice, nor telling people not to feel the way they do or that they are silly, nor trying to solve their problems, nor doing something for them. Ugo Betti said: *“Nothing matters half so much... to reassure one another, to answer each other .. perhaps only you can listen to me and not laugh”*

Process:

- I. Tell participants: “Close your eyes, become aware of your breathing. Think of the word *confront*. Let ideas and associations come. Remember the first three words you just thought of.”

2. Have the participants call out their 3 words, popcorn-style.
3. NOTE: confront usually conveys an image of fighting. However, it originally did not mean 'fight'. "Confront" means to come face-to-face with, from the Latin "confrontare" which also means to have a common border or to put the frons (foreheads) together. In other words to confront is to put our heads together; it is an intimate act.
4. Pair the participants up. Ask them to come up with a topic that is controversial between them (e.g. abortion, corporal punishment, corrective rape or what TV programme they will watch tonight). Ask them to put their foreheads together physically and, while holding that position, to give their opinions forcefully.
5. Note: the pairs may find this difficult to do and may eventually seek common ground.
6. Now debrief the experience: *What was that like for you?*

Part 2: Guided Visualisation

(15minutes)

1. Tell the group:

"Find a comfortable position, relaxed, feet on the floor and now clear your minds of everything except the awareness of your own body. Close your eyes, be comfortable, be aware of your

breathing. Inhale to the count of 4, hold for 2 and exhale to a count of 4. “

“You are walking by yourself. there is no-one else around. It is a warm, sunny day. You are feeling really good. In the far distance you see someone approaching, someone whom you care about and with whom you have some unfinished business, an unresolved dispute... What are your thoughts? What are your assumptions? How do you feel?

As you come face-to-face, what do you say? What do you do? (pause here for at least 10 seconds)

How does the other person respond? (Again pause for at least 10 seconds)

You each now continue on your own way. Be aware of how you feel..... When you are ready, return to the room.....”

2. Now divide the participants into small groups of three. For two minutes each person may share as s/he chooses:
 - a. *What happened? And*
 - b. *How satisfied did you feel as you continued on your way?*
3. (Have these questions written up on newsprint for guidance of the group in sharing)

Part 3: Rights and Equity

(30mins)

In this part of the exercise we are going to look at why carefronting is often difficult and what keeps us from carefronting in our relationships with others.

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1. Divide the participants into pairs. Put them into two lines. Separate the pairs as far as possible.
2. Have all the Ones stand with their arms folded, expressionless. The Twos stand facing the Ones, maintaining eye contact. The Twos are to shake their fists at their partners repeating “I have a right...” over and over, until the sentence finishes itself. Tell the Twos not to programme themselves ahead of time. Have them allow the “right” they are claiming come out of their depths and surprise them. Then have them demand that right with authority. It may be an irrational “right”. That is OK. It does not have to be logical or make sense.
3. Now reverse the roles.
4. Still facing each other, have the partners finish the observation” *“What that was like for me was....”*
5. Ask the Ones: “Now think of the ‘right’ that you have just expressed. Imagine that your partner is someone who stands in the way of that ‘right’. Find a way to say with authority *“I have the right to ...and you are standing in the way of my right by.....”*
6. Again reverse the roles.
7. Return the pairs to the large group circle. Debrief the experience with the following questions:

- a. Is my “right” (from the exercise) a universal right, or individual to me?
- b. What keeps us from expressing our rights assertively rather than aggressively?
- c. Unfinished business or issues from our past often make us bring anger to the table when we try to express what we believe to be our “rights”. What other emotions or conditions does anger mask?
- d. How can we free ourselves to be who we are? To what do we aspire?
- e. What is the difference between saying “I have the right to...” and “I have the power to”?
- f. What is the difference between assertiveness and aggression?
- g. What is the difference between “I need” and “I want”?

Tinker Toys^{vi}

The objectives of this exercise are

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1. To examine how different roles in a task or project cause people to perceive and act differently
2. To look at feelings of trust and competence in a complex working group
3. To demonstrate that the more we are removed from a goal the more frustrating it becomes to complete a task

For this exercise you will need the following materials:

-  Toothpicks, packet of “liquorices all sorts” per team
-  Where no break away room exists, something to conceal the artefact
-  Masking tape to mark out spaces

The Process

(30mins)

(Consult the diagram below for how to set up the room)

- Build a fairly complicated man/car/object from Liquorices All Sorts and place in the box called the PROTOTYPE/MODEL
- Place this in a separate room or mark off this area of the room as the viewing area
- Now divide the floor to create separate working spaces for the teams

- Set up a supply box for each team at the other end of the room (or in another break away room)
- Divide participants into teams of five (or six and extra person is an observer)
- Each team must assign the following roles to the team members:

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1. *Looker (sees prototype and tells runner)*
2. *Runner (communicates what the Looker says to the builder)*
3. *Builder (gets instructions from the runner and negotiates with the supplier what s/he needs to build the product)*
4. *Evaluator (this is the only person who sees both the prototype and the product BUT s/he cannot speak as they are gagged with masking tape. They may only nod their head to say yes or shake their head to say no)*
5. *Supplier (controls the supply box, negotiates with the builder and provides resources depending on what s/he feels fit)*
6. *Observer (watches the process and dynamics of the group)*



Allow all the team members to have a quick viewing of their materials with which they will build the product

and allow a few minutes planning or caucus. At this point the Lookers and Evaluators have NOT seen the prototype.

Now the process begins:

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- The Looker remains in the viewing circle and studies the prototype as many times as needed
- Looker carries information to the runner explaining the details of the design
- The Runner goes between the Looker and the Builder carrying the design information between the two team members
- The Builder goes to the supplier to negotiate for the pieces needed to build the product within the allotted time for construction
- The Evaluator has access to the prototype and the product and may only communicate with nods and shakes whether the design of the product is correct if when asked for a yes/no response
- The rules are strictly enforced and observers may be used to assist facilitators to enforce rules in large groups

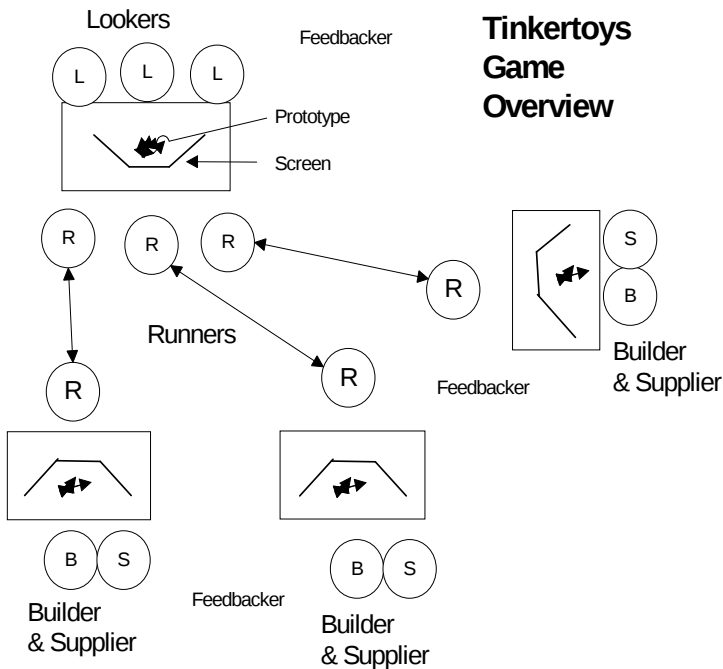


Debrief

(20mins)

1. *How did you feel while you were doing the exercise?*
2. *How did you feel towards specific teammates?*
3. *Did the task get easier or harder as you went along?*
4. *Did you find yourself getting angry or frustrated?*
5. *Did you blame others when you struggled with the task?*
6. *How did you feel about having to get information you needed from a second hand source?*
7. *How did it feel to depend on others?*
8. *How is communication affected when we cannot see the whole picture?*
9. *What specific situation in your work or community does this remind you of?*

Tinkertoys Game Overview



Some key learnings from this exercise include:

1. **Our behaviour and perceptions are strongly influenced by our roles and functions**
2. **During any complex task there must be sufficient planning, role definition, effective communication and cooperation within the team**
3. **Trust, mutual accountability and transparency are critical components to ensuring that the team achieves their goal and enables them to deliver**
4. **When people are removed from the decision making process and related information they will become frustrated and hinder these processes**

Pattern Balls^{vii}

The objective of this exercise is to explore how communication works in organisations and how some systems function.

For this exercise you will need a selection of 3-5 balls of different consistencies (hard/soft) and even shapes and sizes.

Process

(about 10mins)

Have all the participants stand in a circle, one arm held up.

Tell the group that they are going to establish a pattern.

You will pass the ball to someone; she will pass it to someone else and so on.

You will pass the ball to someone whose hand is held up; once they have received the ball and passed it on to the next person, they will drop their hand.

Once the ball has been passed to everyone and returned to you, pass it to the person you threw it to the very first time and let the ball follow the same pattern.

After a few rounds, once the pattern has settled down, introduce another ball into the pattern

Then another... And another... and another....

To end the exercise the process is reversed.

As the balls come round, pocket them one-by-one to gently bring the exercise to a close.

Debrief

(15mins)

Have the group reflect on what had happened during the exercise.

Have the group think of the nervous laughter and how that betrayed their unease with change in the system.

Have them reflect on how they handled people dropping the ball and whether they did anything to help or hinder the process

Have them also consider how smoothly things went when everyone was clear about their own contribution and how they got to a point where no matter how many balls were whizzing through the air at one time, it could be dealt with easily because the group had agreed upon the structure .

Some key learnings from this exercise include:

- 1. For a group to work successfully, everyone needs to know what the pattern is and what the overarching purpose is (everyone needs to know what the values are and why they are there – for everyone's benefit)***
- 2. Agreeing on a structure makes the process of interaction easier***

My Secret Spot/Touching the Tip^{viii}

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The objectives of this exercise are to explore basic power dynamics in a group and to understand the basic elements which enable harnessing community power.

Other than the participants no additional materials are required.

Process

(10mins)

1. Divide the participants into groups of 4-5 and ask each group to form a circle and interlock their arms.
2. Provide the following instructions to the groups:
3. Each person **SILENTLY** chooses a spot in the room.
4. Your task is to: *“Get the group to your spot”*
5. You are not allowed to speak and will have 2 minutes to get the group to your spot.
6. Observe behaviours and processes in each group. End the exercise after two minutes and debrief.

Debrief

(20mins)

Some questions for debriefing the exercise are:

- *What happened in your group?*
- *Did all of you get to your spot?*
- *How did you feel?*

- *How did individuals react and communicate in your group?*



Some key learnings from this exercise include:

- ✓ ***Everyone has some or other form of power and people demonstrate their power in confluence different ways.***
- ✓ ***Individuals have the option to combine their power to create power within the group.***
- ✓ ***Individual may choose to use their power against each other in order to achieve individual needs or they may work together and cooperate to ensure that the needs of all are met thereby increasing the group power.***

Samoan Circle^{ix}

In some Pacific island communities (and Samoa might not be one of them), issues were debated, in years gone by, by calling together all interested parties to share their views in an open and equitable discussion format. After several days of feasting and drinking together, those who still felt there was an issue gathered in a circle to discuss the matter. No one was in charge of the meeting. Anyone spoke out who was stirred by the discussion. The more interested participants moved closer to the centre of the discussion circle. The less interested remained on the fringe of the circle, or drifted away. The discussion went on and on until those most concerned in the outcome of the matter could arrive at some agreement. Then they all had a final drink together and went home.

The Samoan circle is a leaderless meeting intended to help negotiations in controversial issues. While there is no 'leader', a professional facilitator can welcome participants and explain the seating arrangements, rules, timelines and the process. As with the Fishbowl process, the Samoan circle has people seated in a circle within a circle. However, this time participants in the outer circle can decide to join the discussion by occupying a vacant seat in the inner circle or by gently tapping the shoulders of one of the inner circle participants.

What distinguishes Fishbowls and Samoan circles from other types of discussion?

- a) they emphasize listening deeply to others;
- b) they encourage more to-the-point reflections (which have been maturing when listening to others);
- c) they bring about a rich variety of points of view and ideas in a short time and follow the energy of the group; and
- d) they don't require dedicated facilitators (just someone to document the decision).

In addition to being a leaderless conversation that is self-hosted where people may discuss a burning issue for some people, the Samoan Circle May also be used as a recapitulation of what went before – inviting participants to share what they remembered since the last session – and what might have happened in the interim.

The only other materials required are for capturing what is discussed – a flipchart, paper and pens, a graphic rendition of the discussion etc.



The Process

(30mins)

1. Arrange two concentric circles of chairs in the room.
2. Place 4 chairs in the centre of the room.
3. Ask for 4 volunteers to start the conversation who seat themselves in the inner ring of chairs; the rest of the participants sit in the larger circle.
4. Explain that participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own learnings or questions they may from the previous session (recap); or that those in the inner circle will kick-start the conversation because it matters to them. Participants will take responsibility for the conversation..
5. Explain that the conversation will happen among the people sitting in the four chairs in the middle.

6. At any stage, those in the larger circle can also contribute, however to do so they must come to the centre, stand behind one of the 4 and tap him/her on the shoulder to take his/her place and to continue the conversation.
7. Hand over to the volunteers in the circle.
8. On a hidden flipchart, record the lessons as they emerge from the conversation.
Check: What questions arise? What gaps emerge?
9. Also check that everyone in the 4 chairs has a fair chance of speaking; also that people from the outside circle are making use of the opportunity to speak

Debrief

(10-15mins)

1. Share with the group the themes, questions and gaps or issues that you noted.
2. Also note any questions or issues that need to be taken up further in the process.



Endnotes

ⁱ This guide to harvesting can be found at

<http://www.artofhosting.org/thepractice/artofharvesting/>

ⁱⁱ You can find the audio file at

http://media.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/mindfulness_just_this_breath.mp3

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from an exercise at <http://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/guided-imagery-exercises.html> See the website for other guided relaxation exercises.

^{iv} You may find the audio file at

http://media.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/nourish_from_past.mp3

^v An exercise drawn from the **Alternatives to Violence Project** (AVP), an international network of individuals and organisations facilitating understanding of violence and promoting nonviolence. See www.avpinternational.org

^{vi} An exercise drawn from the **Alternatives to Violence Project** (AVP). See www.avpinternational.org

^{vii} An exercise drawn from the **Alternatives to Violence Project** (AVP). See www.avpinternational.org

^{viii} An exercise drawn from the **Alternatives to Violence Project** (AVP) See www.avpinternational.org

^{ix} An exercise drawn from the **Alternatives to Violence Project** (AVP) See www.avpinternational.org