

SHINE Hazel Williamson Award

Training Course Report

Course Title: **Strong and Clear - Holistic Leadership, Group Dynamics and Speak your truth. 11th and 12th July 2009 – Glastonbury**

Trainer: William Bloom <http://williambloom.com>

AIMS:

To provide skills in being a **leader** in a holistic way; managing the dynamics we encounter in everyday communications at work, in relationships and with groups.

...To be able clearly to express your **values** and **beliefs** – and be heard”.

SUMMARY

The weekend course was an *experiential* workshop with a group of about 40 participants. The first day was spent introducing us to techniques such as: focussing on your values and applying these to your projects; embodying your values with relaxation and breathing techniques; following the exemplars of Mandela and Obama; examining and reflecting on your own behaviour and potential changes to make to it; being a member of this group for the weekend and learning leadership by *being* in a leadership role and taking responsibility throughout the event.

COURSE ELEMENTS :

➤ Small group exercise :

The Ship Going Down. We listed the **qualities a good leader** would show and the whole group agreed on the following ones:

Calm – embodied presence; confident; comfortable in themselves; using ‘Hara’, the Japanese concept for the core, or body’s energy- centre in the belly.

Range of voice – clear, strong and full

Physically grounded – not running about; able to act e.g. pulling folk to their feet.

Solution-focussed – a cool assessment; intelligent; reflective; resourceful.

Presence of mind

Personal authority

Prepared to take risks

➤ **Breath exercise**

Focussing on slow calm breaths in the belly while a partner clapped hands and shouted around to try and distract.

➤ **Holding**

Individual Exercise

Sketch my project or group that I am leading and represent the members and myself, and Holding them in my field. This meant staying with my breath and radiating from my Hara or core, visualising them around me. Based on the Japanese model – 3rd level elegant, we can create a ‘chalice’.

➤ **Hanging out with your values**

Individual/partner exercise

Reflected on my **highest values** in life, by first focussing on the breath in the Hara, then reflecting on what is most important to me in life. Then shared with partner and unpacked by discussion.

Advised to regularly build in time to **hang out with your values**, e.g. in the bath. Check whether actions and behaviour match the values you have chosen. Also asking how can I engage others with my values?

➤ **Namaste**

Greeting the spirits and souls in the Sufi sense, for example, **the 'spirit of education'** ; team spirit, etc. Projects have a soul and spirits. Greeting the souls of myself, my spirits (including clan spirits!) and allies, angels or any benevolent forces. For example, as applied to my **shared reading project** , they were the 'spirit of reading' and the allies were – a plethora of great writers! This process engenders respect for your won project and seeing it as not your sole responsibility.

➤ **My project Vision**

This has to be worked at in order to name the specific stages; where do I want it to go?; how is it coloured by my values?

If the project is a long-term one, i.e. decades, it can be seen as **Cathedral-building**. I have to spend time reflecting on questions like: What does it look like? How do I *feel about it*?

The importance of spending time thinking about your project, daily, seeing the potential positive outcomes, was stressed, as this activity will help you to embody the project, in the same way as Mandela embodied the rainbow nation. Also, this kind of inner work prepares you for the action. The point is that the way *I experience my project in my nervous system*, makes the project feel all looked after. The purity of attention will see it through and by that time it doesn't matter if the actual enactment fails. Part of the preparation should also be to welcome saboteurs. So you are not surprised when they come.

➤ **Experience the greatest outcome for your project**

Exercise

Shut eyes and imagine yourself and act out, playing a musical instrument, or doing a craft or hobby. Imagine someone says you do that well. Then after a year they ask you to show it to a small group. Then a bigger group, an audience, then imagine all the world and the universe LOVE your thing. The sun applauds you. Because you have just being continuing to do your thing, it is not that big a deal. Well-meaning people feel they have to do something to support you. From David Spangler, to envision the quantum fields of infinite possibility, then to particularise it is a useful tool. The experience made me feel humble, as if the activity was bigger than me.

My feeling was that I can prepare myself to accept a lot of attention without feeling daunted.

OUTCOMES

I gained new ways of looking at work projects such as the development of shared reading groups in the community. The spiritual elements, such as welcoming the soul of people and projects were new to me but I did find them easy to apply. I immediately experienced a change in my personal feelings around my general ability in assertion and, in particular, with individuals at work that I find difficult. It also gave me a much bigger perspective on my reading group project. For example, when I welcomed the soul of this project, along with its allies, I was surprised and pleased to find that many of the great writers, poets and so on, were allies and this gave me a great sense of empowerment.

Since the course, I would say that I am applying this model generally in everyday work situations. I feel more in control, more relaxed and secure and as a result more prepared to lead in my ongoing job role as Outreach Librarian in Glasgow Addiction

services, and as lead for the shared reading in GAS. I am more prepared to ask for the correct facilities and conditions for the needs of the group and for my project as a whole.

If dealing with someone in the group who was being either upset or emotional, I would feel more 'grounded' and able to lead the situation confidently, holding that person in the bigger perspective with a supportive, caring attitude. Bloom advises us to spend a lot of time *preparing* for the work in our project, in the same way as Mandela prepared for twenty-odd years in Robbin island in prison. He focussed on his vision of the rainbow nation and embodied this value so much that when he was released, it was all ready and waiting to be made physical and real.

During the course, philosophical and religious, ethical and spiritual challenges had to be faced. Such as, very quickly on the Saturday morning, being asked to breathe slowly, eyes shut, and reflect on my highest values in life, and name them. I've never been asked to do that before and found it deeply satisfying. These values I can now use as my checklist for my behaviour, to ask :Did I embody these values today in this or that situation? Bloom asked us :Do you hang out with your values? i.e. Do we actually spend time just reflecting on our highest values in life(for example when in the bath) and ruminating on our life in this way. Reflection is something that I know, from my experience, is an important part of religious practice. It relates to reflective practice in health professions and takes it to a different level. New developments in nursing and psychology around mindfulness and compassion are heading in a similar direction.

One of Bloom's overarching aims is the integration of traditional health practices and emerging (alternative, holistic) practices. Much of our practice on the weekend was to discuss in small groups in depth, the participants' individual project and its' problems and potential solutions. Self-management was advised for good health and good humour.

Since the course, I have applied the skills when communicating in meetings and in a recent strategy group.

My thanks to SHINE for awarding me this course as I have found it very beneficial.

Christine Cather , August 2009