

Performing as a Trainer

Aims:

To share, and own as a group of people, some of the fears and anxieties we have in our role as trainers

To identify factors which create or reduce anxiety for us (and our participants)

To formulate personal strategies to overcome our anxieties and put our participants at ease

Resources required:

Training room and small group spaces; flipchart, OHP and pens

- 3.1 'A good group' OHP transparency
- 3.2 'Five truths about fear' OHP transparency
- 3.3 'Five truths about fear' handout copies
- 4.2 'Shoulder Tapper' exercise participants' instruction sheets
- 4.4 'My Greatest Fear as a Trainer' participants' instruction sheets
- 4.5 'Personal Preparation' instruction sheets

'Learning log' sheets

1 Background notes



In Chapter 11 we highlight the fact that fear is the greatest enemy of learning, and the consequent necessity of creating secure and non-threatening learning environments. Fear and anxiety can also 'paralyse' trainers, particularly those without a groupwork background, or who are relatively inexperienced. Chapter 6 demonstrates that confidence in the theory and practice of task-centred groupwork can provide trainers with an invaluable repertoire of perspectives, concepts and skills which are very powerful when used with care and professionalism in training situations.

Fear affects all of us a lot of the time. Fear is a universal human emotion and as such is evident in many human interactions. Fear is just as likely to be a positive response to a particular situation as a negative one. It is the fear of being run down by a No 11 bus that leads me to look and listen carefully before crossing roads (that fear was reinforced by my being run down by a car in my youth). As tutor of this course you will hopefully already be aware of some of your own fears and anxieties, and will know what to do about them. The key to unblocking fear and anxiety is exactly that - doing something about it.

Trainers' fears and anxieties can include factors to do with the size and composition of the training group - a 'large'

group ('large' being in some respects a subjective term), or one comprising one's own friends.....or line managers (stranger things have been known!). They can include doubts about your own knowledge, skills or ability to tackle particularly difficult training situations.

It is perhaps the 'performing' aspect of being a trainer which can cause so much anxiety. "Will I be able to carry it off with a group of senior managers?" "Will my style come across as credible with these very experienced community activists?" "Will I be able to confront the hidden agendas that exist in this team?"

As tutor of this course you will 'perform' much as an actor does. You will accept a training role and a contract with a particular audience (your trainees). You will thoughtfully use your own character and personality to enhance your professional training skills and your knowledge of the subject or process area. You will use all of you. You will be the instrument through which an issue can be presented, explored, measured against experience, and wisdom gained. As in the performing arts generally there is the danger that the performance itself becomes more important than the learning objectives.

We're not in the business of full time performing here - we're in the business of conceiving, organising and delivering high quality training programmes. In groupwork parlance we are running 'good groups'.

The Tao of Leadership by John Heider is an adaptation of an ancient Chinese book of wisdom. The original Tao Te Ching was addressed to the leaders of the time - the sages and wise political rulers. Here's what John Heider's outstanding translation has to say about good groups. This is reproduced as an OHP/handout in 3.1.

A Good Group

*A good group is better than a spectacular group.
When leaders become superstars, the teacher outshines the teaching.
Very few superstars are down-to-earth. Fame breeds fame and before long they get carried away with themselves.
Then they fly off center and crash.*

*The wise leader settles for good work and then lets others have the floor.
The leader does not take all the credit for what happens and has no need for fame.
A moderate ego demonstrates wisdom.*

The 'Shoulder Tapper' exercise (4.1) is a relatively non-threatening and potentially humorous performing sequence which will help participants reflect on their presentation skills. The generation of this exercise is interesting as it was created by participants during a test run of some of the material for this Manual.

If you can rid yourself of fear and anxiety about your training role and your use of self then you will be able to flow naturally with your training group as the course progresses. You will be relaxed and 'centred'. You will be

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in control without being controlling.

There are some truths about fear which will help trainers better understand its nature and deal with it. These truths are shown here and presented as an OHP/handout in 3.2 They are contained in the aptly titled 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway' by Susan Jeffers.

- *The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow*

Whenever we take a risk or move into unfamiliar territory we quite naturally feel fear. The way we grow and develop is by tackling new situations, acquiring new skills, stretching ourselves, taking risks.

As long as we grow and develop and learn we will experience fear. Like loss and some other emotions it does not go away. We do not 'grow out of it' no matter how skilled we may become in dealing with it.

- *The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it*

"Going out and doing it" is the key to handling fear and anxiety in specific situations. Just as a participant will take the risk to disclose in order to take experiential learning on board, thus learning for herself, so you can diminish the fear you feel by doing or facing the thing that you fear. You'll never totally get rid of the fear itself but with good preparation and practice at doing it you'll soon be able to handle the nerves and fear and be able to concentrate totally on the particular piece of training at hand.

- *The only way to feel better about myself is to go out....and do it*

Stretching yourself as a trainer and overcoming your fears brings the added bonus of self-confidence and self-respect. Of course as you overcome each new challenge another, with its own associated fears, emerges to keep you on your toes.

- *Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I'm on unfamiliar territory, but so is everyone else*

You are not alone in fearing the unknown, which is what it's all about for most of us when we're on unfamiliar territory. This is a fear which is recognised every day when trainers and groupworkers prepare their material. The good leader will recognise that every new training event or new group is a leap into the unknown - for everyone concerned. The good leader will do all she can to create a secure and relaxed atmosphere particularly in the very early stages. This fear is the one that trainers help participants recognise through the use of disclosure techniques.

- *Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness*

This illustrates how important risk-taking is to life in

general. If you don't take risks you atrophy and are consigned to live with a feeling of helplessness and dread - you are unable to fulfill your professional and personal potential. In the words of one consultant, desperate to get this concept across to some intransigent consultees...."Just **** Do It!" This has become known in some circles as 'JFDI'.

The compelling message of these truths is that we must feel the fear - and do it anyway. There is an imperative to *act* rather than prevaricate, delay, or avoid.

Working with fear and risk-taking are two essential prerequisites for the good trainer. They just happen also to be two essential prerequisites for a fulfilling life on planet earth, and an apt demonstration that professional and personal development is inextricably linked.

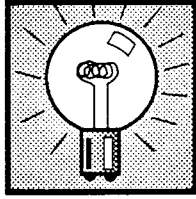
The 'Active Listening' triads exercise (4.4) encourages participants to disclose and elaborate on their greatest fear as a trainer. As an exercise structure, 'triads' is simple yet powerful, and an excellent example of an experiential exercise which is challenging, supportive and capable of adaptation.

All of this chapter so far has been concerned with fear as it affects the trainer. Hopefully you and your training group will already have made links to situations where it is participants' fears which need to be addressed. You will have found that during training events there can be a set of fears which are common to both trainer and participants - these (e.g. the fear of a 'new group') can be very useful starting points for trainer-led disclosure of shared fears and anxieties.

The 'Trainer/Participant Anxieties' and 'Personal Preparation' exercises (4.3 and 4.6) will help tease out these issues and what your participants can do to reduce their effects.

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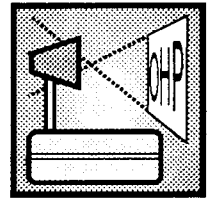
2 Suggestions for using these materials



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- 1 Introduce the session and its aims.
- 2 Introductory input/discussion on 'Performing as a trainer' and on 'Fear', using the background notes, OHP slides 3.1 and 3.2 and handout copies (3.3).
- 3 Run the 'Shoulder Tapper' sequence (4.1 and 4.2) to tease out issues about performing and fear.
- 4 Encourage a wide-ranging and detailed examination of the factors working for and against anxiety with the 'Trainer/Participant Anxieties' exercise (4.3).
- 5 The powerful Triads sequence is a superb one to encourage disclosure and develop insight into 'my greatest fear as a trainer' (4.4).
- 6 Participants can usefully spend some time now thinking of concrete action they can take 'back home' by using exercise 4.5.
- 7 Distribute 'Learning log'.
- 8 Initiate a plenary discussion to consolidate the learning points of this part of the course, review any outstanding issues and seek evaluative feedback.
- 9 Close the session by reviewing its aims and make reference to future sessions if appropriate.

3.1 OHP Transparency

'A Good Group'

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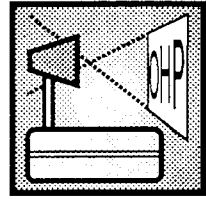
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The Tao of Leadership by John Heider (Wildwood House Ltd.).

3.2 OHP Transparency

Five truths about fear



- The fear will never go away as long as I continue to grow
- The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out and do it
- The only way to feel better about myself is to go out....and do it
- Not only am I going to experience fear whenever I'm on unfamiliar territory, but so is everyone else
- Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness

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3.3 Handout

Five truths about fear *



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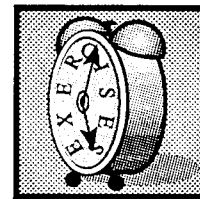
** Each of the five short statements is taken from 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway' by Susan Jeffers. Century Hutchinson 1987.*

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4.1 Exercise: trainer's notes

'The Shoulder Tapper'



This exercise is designed to give participants an insight into some of the issues which may be around for them when making training presentations. Specifically, it deals with the different kinds of 'reception' one can get from a training group, e.g. a 'hostile', 'bored' or 'appreciative' audience.

The exercise is designed as a low-key role play. The trainer participants on this course may, like most, be anxious about performing in front of peers, so stress the fun and gaming element of the sequence. Stress the key role of the shoulder tapper in managing the event.

Purpose:

To encourage insight into our presentation skills.

To experience a range of training group responses.

Process:

- 1 Introduce the purpose of the role play exercise and provide a brief explanation of the process.

This involves a group of people waiting to make a presentation. Behind them is the 'Shoulder Tapper' who selects the first presenter by tapping him on the shoulder from behind. The presenter now takes up position (see 4.2) and selects both the *subject to present* on and the *type of 'audience'* to present to. After the allocated time for the presentation has elapsed the shoulder tapper *without warning* selects the second presenter as before.

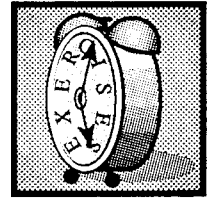
- 2 Distribute copies of the instruction sheet. If your group is a large one (16 or more), split into two or more groups of eight or nine people and run the exercise simultaneously with these groups.
- 3 Ask for a volunteer 'Shoulder Tapper'.
- 4 Explain that this sequence is not a 'test' and that participants are not being evaluated on their performance.
- 5 Encourage participants to select an 'audience' that they may not have experienced before or are anxious about.
- 6 Determine the length of time each presenter should speak for (three minutes is fairly challenging for an off-the-top-of-your-head sequence like this). Ask the 'Shoulder Tapper' to begin the sequence.

- 7 The sequence ends with the Trainer tapping the Shoulder Tapper to make the final presentation.
- 8 Debrief the exercise with each small group to tease out issues. Bear in mind that hostile groups are often preferred to bored ones (at least you get some kind of feedback you can work on with hostile groups!).

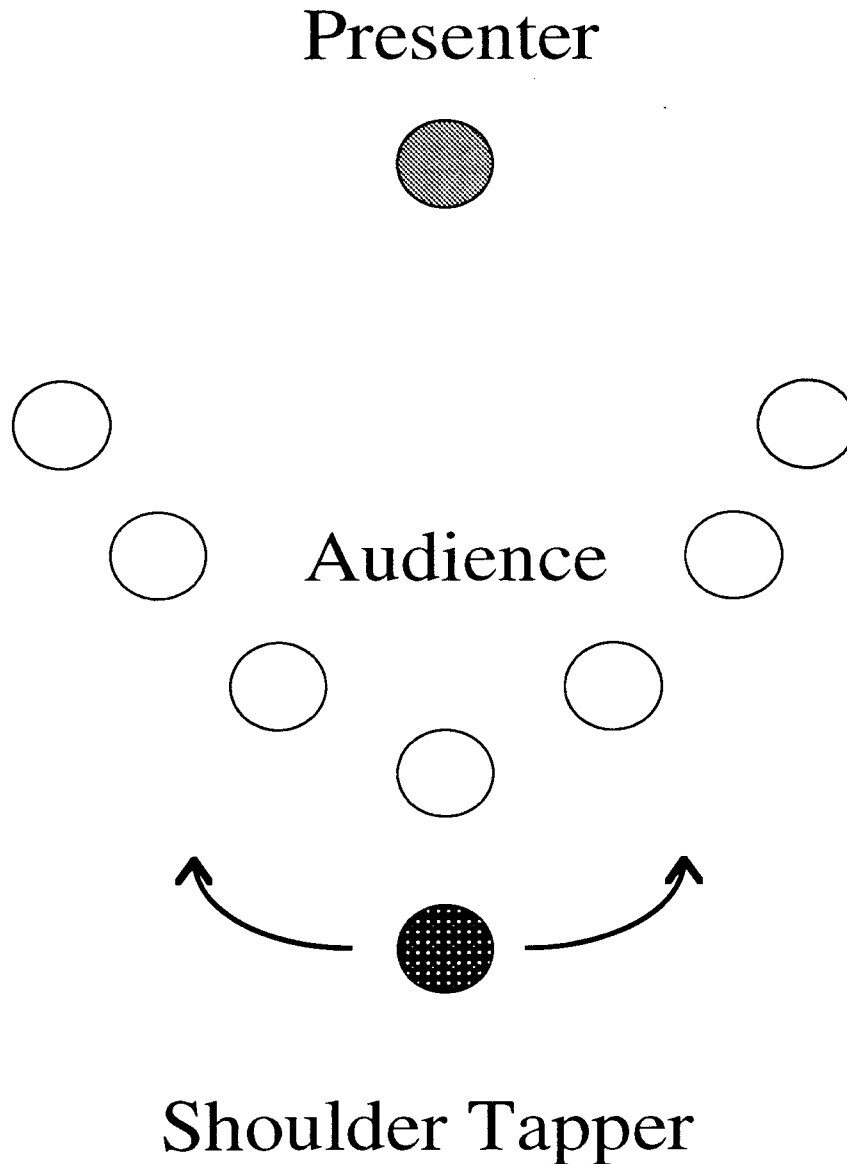
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4.2 Exercise: participants' instruction sheet

'The Shoulder Tapper'

The diagram below indicates the seating arrangements for the exercise. The role of the Shoulder Tapper is to select the presenters one after the other in a continuous cycle, thus avoiding the need for a trainer-led sequence.



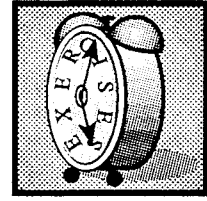
Remember that when it is your turn, i.e. when the Shoulder Tapper taps you, you must choose from a hostile, bored or appreciative audience.

You should then 'present' for the required number of minutes on one of the following topics:

- the contribution of 'cabinet government' to British politics
- the morality of war
- the country I would really like to visit on holiday
- my way of relaxing

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4.3 Exercise: trainer's notes

'Trainer/Participant Anxieties'

This exercise uses Brainstorming in pairs and small groups to elicit views on the factors which create and reduce anxiety for both trainers and participants. The exercise should help your training group come to a broad consensus on these factors, which can be referred to and used as learning material later in the course, e.g. in Chapter 13 'Planning a Training Exercise'.

Purpose:

To increase understanding of the nature of anxieties which can develop during training sessions.

To examine anxiety from both the trainer and participant perspective.

Process:

- 1 Introduce the purpose of the exercise.
- 2 Divide participants into pairs and ask *each person* to write down the factors which increase anxiety for participants – a list of factors for trainers should then be produced. Participants should 'check-out' their lists with their partner before going on to brainstorm the factors which reduce anxiety.
- 3 Depending on the size of your training group, combine the pairs to make small groups of four, six or eight. These larger groups should share their brainstorm lists and discuss and note emerging issues for ten minutes or so.
- 4 Bring the groups into plenary session to construct a chart (see below) on flipchart paper which brings together the key factors from all groups. As trainer you should note down important issues which emerge, indicating to participants at which point in the course they are likely to be handled.

It is quite common for groups to identify factors which have influence on both participants and trainers, or to identify factors which can be both positive or negative depending on the situation.

	FOR PARTICIPANTS	FOR TRAINERS
Factors which INCREASE Anxiety		
Factors which REDUCE Anxiety		