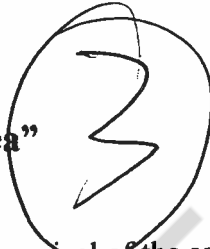


To Kevin, Jim
+ Shaeve

Tosso for
offer to TTT

cc Simon



Looking at a Trainer's "blind Area" Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims.

The Spring issue of the TTT brought us a revival of the section of the journal in which trainers talk about their mistakes.

I read what the two writers had to say with interest and also with a twinge of iffiness: does this take us back to early Christian public confessionals?

No, the usefulness of the column to me is not what these folk manage to say about themselves, it is what they manage to say about me, without knowing it.

Then, suddenly the Johari Window came to mind. Which area of the Johari Window were these two people writing about? Let me remind you of what the the JH Window looks like:

	known to self	not known to self
known to others	1. Area of free activity public self	2. Blind area for me "they know, I don't"
not known to others	3. Avoided or hidden area private self	4. Unknown area Unconscious to me and to others.

(The Johari Window was dreamt up by **Joe and Harry/hari**, respectively Luft and Ingham. See *Group Processes: An introduction to Group dynamics*, Joseph Luft, National Press Books, 1970.)

I felt that the writers in the Spring issue were mainly in Area 1 the "known to me and known to the trainees" area., and that, maybe, other parts of the Johari Window are more rewarding to explore.

To my mind, area 4 is the most challenging, as an investigation here demands delving into places in the unconscious which are normally off-bounds. People who have worked with Bernard Dufeu (Teaching Myself, OUP, 94) in the context of teacher sensitivity training, have unearthed some amazing things from their area 4. It is startling to realise that a teacher sometimes makes unconscious demands on her students and can become upset and confused when they fail to deliver on the demands she has never made explicit and does not even know about herself.

" I am angry with you for failing to do what I never asked you to do, and was not aware I wanted you to."

Then I began wondering how deeply I had been into Area 2, (the part where I am blind but my students see clearly). I have, of course, asked for feedback from the trainees at various points in a course, I have tried to observe trainee reaction to things that happen in the training room, especially the unvarnished reactions that come through voice, body posture, breathing and skin tone etc... Why have I never actually asked trainees to keep a diary of the micro and macro ways in which I impede their learning, get on their wick, am wrong for them?

Over Easter 2001, I taught a two-week, "Creative Teacher" course to eight well-informed and well-trained Inset colleagues, six of them from Northern Europe, one from Northern Switzerland and one from Northern Spain.

Over the first week I asked them to spend 10 minutes at the end of each day making, individual, private notes of all the ways in which I had blocked them or messed up their learning process.

At the end of the first week they indicated that they did not want to continue with the exercise. I then asked them to write me a letter indicated my errors, drawing on their diaries. Here is what some of them wrote:

Mistakes that Mario made which disturb my learning

I find it extremely disturbing and difficult to make notes on some minor things and concentrate at the same time on something else, something more important from my point of view.

My first training error was to get her doing this trainer-mistake spotting exercise! Maybe this is a Northern person unhappy with double-tasking, with the request to do two things simultaneously.

On Tuesday you were "teacherific" (teacherish+horrific). Inger wanted to learn the difference between "loud" and "loudly". You didn't answer right away but confused the issue by adding "aloud" to the set of words.

If I can't readily answer, then I throw up a smoke screen of extra complexity.

You probably embarrassed people a couple of times on purpose. This is what happens to me at school when I try to correct my pupils in the way in the way I was shown at teacher training college. (I try to get them to find out the mistakes for themselves.)

This talking to me is bringing her to reflect on her own behaviour and beliefs.

I sometimes find it hard to concentrate- I am still thinking about a problem we have discussed, or an exercise, or I am writing my notes and you start on something new. (It is difficult to concentrate on making notes or any other individual work eg reading or writing, if you start making comments at the same time. This causes misunderstanding.

This is rude, other-unaware behaviour on my part. Is it due to a mad desire to teach as much as I can? How do I create this anxiety in myself?

My head is sometimes so full of new ideas that it starts aching in the afternoon.

I can hear Bernard Dufeu laughingly saying to me: "at Pilgrims all you do is stuff geese!"

But I still need more theory... on NLP, for instance, and how to use it in my work. That might open new gates.

I mostly go from the details to the big picture, She needs the big image first.

Hindering Actions in Mario's Teaching

When we are asked to read a hand-out quietly, some trainees talk to you and you answer them. In this way the group misses out on useful information or explanations and I find it hard to concentrate (the same goes for writing activities).

Why don't you get the students to silently write the words on the board that they want explained, and you'll explain them when everybody is ready to listen.

This sounds like the plea of a very auditory person, who finds stray speech distracting. Paradoxically, I am expressing my own very auditory need in nattering to people. I'd do well to subordinate my need to hers.

Please write unknown words, such as people's names, on the board, clearly!

Please punch your photocopies before handing them out.

It's a shame you furnish us with photocopies without losing a word about them. Why don't you raise our interest to read them by saying one or two sentences about what they contain?

Wow, and I am so consciously proud of the wealth of material I stack on their chairs without any heavy, didactic spiels about it. For her, at least, my "wealth of input" feels shapeless, without a frame, without an index.

Trainer Mistakes

I only remember that you didn't always explain the meaning of the word, or give a synonym of that word, or even you added new word. But it was rarely. But it may sometimes be very confusing for the student: they still don't know the word, and for dessert they receive another new word!

Sometimes you explain things very quickly, expecting that we know what you are talking about, but some of us may not follow your way of reasoning. Sometimes I need more theory, more basic information about the subject of the session. Frankly, nothing blocked me or make me feel that I was under pressure during your lessons.

My tempo is wrong for her. I failed to check how well she was understanding. I was too much in self, and not enough outside self, observing. I was too detailed, did not give her enough of an informational, intellectual frame.

You annoyed me...

I was slightly annoyed, during my lesson on Fawltly Towers, when you insisted on sitting on the floor after we had

She expressed annoyance at this bit of behaviour more than once

watched the clip and were discussing the exercise. I can't explain why but I find it difficult to talk to someone who I would have to look down upon.

orally, as well as in her letter. What was I doing by sitting on the floor, in terms of her unconscious needs? I was conscious of avoiding being bullied by a dominant female, this avoidance being a central bit of my life script. Do I need to play out these proxy dramas in my trainees' training space? Dysfunctional.

The trainee thoughts and feelings above are helpful to me in a variety of ways:

1. They make me think of one particular colleague who is strong in many of the areas where my weaknesses, as observed by my trainees, lie. I have a better chance of clearing away these mistakes by positively modelling on her than by feeling bad about each error. Modelling on particular excellences in others has long been central to my work life.
 2. This exercise has been especially beneficial to me as I tend to be very *self-referenced* (in making decisions I tend to spend much more time looking in than looking out.) This exercise makes me pay attention to clearly, consciously articulated opinions of others, thoughts I cannot easily twist to suit my inner convictions. (the very fact that I felt the need to gloss the opinions of the trainees (see right hand column above) shows how much I need to masticate, engulf and marioise what comes from outside) The voices of trainees I came to respect and feel affection for over two intensive weeks, are likely to successfully resist my need to ventriloquise them inside me.
 3. The fact that the trainees did **not** like doing this exercise over the first week, shows me how powerful the initial **group honeymoon period** can be. I asked them to find downsides in what was an overwhelming positive experience for most of them. One person expressed this honeymoon feeling by writing me a letter with a dozen major positive points and just a couple of piddling negative ones. I had specifically asked for Mario errors!. Stirrings of **storm** did not happen in this little group until well into the second week. You often discover the strength of unconscious flow when you ask people to swim against it. I think this is what I did here.
 4. As a consequence of 3 above, the right time to launch this exercise is some way into the course, after they have come out of the initial flush of group honeymoon. The activity might even help some people to express stormy feelings they may feel.
 5. A general learning, from this little experiment, is that the flow of feeling in a group is what makes the course what it is, not the trainer's technical input, nor his knowledge, nor their knowledge, not his goals nor their goals. If, as trainer, I manage to be in tune with this river, then I'll probably be in the right place at the right time.
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