

A Model of Trainer Development

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T-groups and trainers have constantly to deal with the paradox between simplicity and complexity. Although the process in a T-group is intricate, the goals are relatively simple. What trainers need to know about interpersonal and group theory and about themselves is vast, but frequently the most effective intervention is just a few words. Even though trainers need to spend years in developing their understanding and skills the ultimate goal is to be able to have such knowledge sufficiently integrated to be consciously ignored but used in an authentic fashion. However, the trap for the developing trainer is frequently the reverse of these paradoxes. The danger is in having an overly simplistic view of the world that leads the trainer to use overly complex interventions.

At one level what could be simpler than developing the ability to interact in an increasingly authentic fashion? But the ability to recognise one's own feelings, accept the vulnerability of sharing them, and take the risk of becoming fully engaged with another person is far from easy. Likewise building norms that support risk-taking without irresponsibility, supportiveness without protectiveness, and confrontation without destructiveness is a major task. Even though at the end of a T-group experience members frequently are amazed at how easy their open interaction has become, they often forget the pain and struggle that built the conditions where such behaviour could take place.

Similarly, being a trainer - a good trainer - in such a process is incredibly complex yet appears so simple. Participants sometimes jokingly comment on what a soft job training is: 'You don't have to prepare; you don't have to lead; you are silent most of the time and when you do talk, half the time you either say "How do you feel about that?" or "Is there something more you want to say?" - and they pay you for that!' What they fail to recognise is that keeping silent is harder than talking, and knowing when to talk (and what to say) so that comments help rather than hinder the process requires sophisticated training.

How difficult for the trainer to learn that frequently the best response to a complex situation is to remain simple because only by so doing can the complexity work itself out rather than be distorted by an artificial order imposed by the trainer. Several years ago I commented to a colleague that no good intervention was longer than 25 words. Now I wonder if any comment, other than a summary intervention that provides cognitive clarification, ought to be that extensive! But knowing what few words to say - and when to shut up so that a member will say it minutes later - is a very difficult decision process.

Learning to become a trainer is a process of moving into greater complexity and greater simplicity at the same time. Trainers need to develop a firm grounding in the applied behavioural sciences, learn an array of intervention and design skills, and gain more insight about their own personal and interpersonal dynamics. But equally important, the trainer has to discover how such complex knowledge, skill, and insight can lead to greater simplicity in training style with less reliance on complicated exercises, elaborate designs, and intricate interventions. This knowledge, once properly integrated, can allow trainers to use themselves as the major training resource in a direct and simple way.

This chapter will deal with these paradoxes by presenting a model of trainer development which describes

three stages that I think most advanced trainers go through. The first stage is 'trainer as a role', in which the novice trainer is learning a theory of training and appropriate intervention skills. The second stage is 'trainer as being', in which the trainer moves from primary cognitive reliance ('training out of one's head') to a greater intuitive reliance ('training out of one's guts'). The final stage is 'training as process', in which the trainer can be sufficiently in tune with what is occurring in the group for the process to largely determine the trainer's actions.

The importance of cognitive and affective skills has been recognised from the earliest writings about the training process (Tannenbaum et al., 1961). What has not been fully explored is the pattern in which these are learned. Although it may appear that I am suggesting that trainers learn cognitive material in Stage I, the affective in Stage II, and an integration in Stage III, the world is not that tidy. An interaction between conceptual and emotional issues exists in all three stages. Furthermore, the third stage is not only an integration of both the cognitive and affective but an internalisation so that trainers stop focusing on their own thoughts and feelings and focus more on the group.

Each stage has its strengths and pitfalls. Because the three stages contain crucial learnings, each one is necessary and should neither be by-passed nor hurriedly travelled through because to do so would deprive the developing trainer of important knowledge and skills. While I believe the third stage is likely to be more effective than the preceding two, trainers can be productive working primarily out of either of the other two stages as long as they are aware of and can compensate for the major problems of each stage.

The following sections of this chapter will describe the three stages, the types of learning each can offer, their limitations and potential pitfalls, and the conditions that lead to the transition from one stage to the next. The chapter will then close with a discussion of the implications of this model of trainer development for an effective training-of-trainers programme.

These thoughts are not based on any rigorous quantitative research but instead reflect observations I have made over the last decade. Some of these observations were made as a staff member in various trainer development programmes sponsored by the NTL Institute, as a supervisor with student trainers in the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University, and from observing myself and others as I've struggled to learn and grow. Since they are primarily my observations, the reader should be warned that they may reflect my biases more than objective reality.

Before describing the stages, I would like to delineate the type of training this chapter describes. Definitions of T-groups may range from highly instrumented training programmes that have a feedback component to a totally unstructured group with a personal growth focus. While the points being made in this chapter may apply to all such groups (and also might be relevant to the teacher in a traditional classroom and the therapist with a client), my primary focus will be on the basic NTL laboratory with either an interpersonal or group emphasis. Although exercises and other structured activities may be part of the general laboratory design, within the T-group itself the major learning component is the unstructured group with members learning from their own interactions.

Another important distinction in this chapter is between a T-group as a laboratory for inquiry and a T-group as skill training. The initial T-groups in the late forties and early fifties were very much of the former type (Bradford, 1974). It was still an emergent field and the leaders had only a vague idea about what could occur. The uncertainty required joint inquiry among participants and staff to discover, by examination of their own process, the dynamics of interpersonal and group behaviour. But as time went on and the same 'lessons' emerged in group after group, T-groups tended to become a workshop for skill attainment rather than a laboratory for exploration. Even worse, as Back (1972) points out, trainers sold a set of predetermined solutions to participants under the guise of scientific examinations. This was often accompanied with a 'true believer' orientation in which strong conformity pressures emerged to accept certain beliefs and values. The trainers had achieved order in a complicated world by a simplistic view of how people should act and groups should operate.

While not advocating the reinvention of the wheel, I am disturbed by the loss of true inquiry in a T-group. What trainers started to confuse was the process necessary for learning to occur and the outcomes from that learning experience. For example, in a T-group it generally holds that more learning will occur if people disclose their feelings about another's behaviour rather than making an attribute of the other's motivations. While that is an important method of learning in the T-group (and outside as well), it is a means for people to learn about themselves. But when such a process variable becomes rigidified into 'the 10 rules to T-grouping' and then generalised to all situations, it distorts the fullness of human interaction.

If a T-group can truly be a learning laboratory, then participants can discover under what conditions reporting feelings is valuable and when raising questions about the intentions of others is appropriate. Not

only can an inquiry model build a more sophisticated and contingent view of the world, but conclusions based on here-and-now events are more likely to fit the member's personal and interpersonal style. Furthermore, a true inquiry model can serve as an important safeguard against the pitfalls that may occur in each of the three developmental stages. Conversely, T-groups which have become skill training workshops limit the extent to which members can develop the skills to learn from their experience (because the trainer has been 'training up the group' to get them to act 'appropriately'). Not learning how to learn limits the participant's ability to build other learning settings at work and at home.

The Three Stages

Stage I - Training as a role

The beginning trainer, even if he or she has participated in several groups and has co-training experience, still finds the notion of leading a group unsettling. This is understandable given the demands of the task. Using one's knowledge of individual, interpersonal, and group processes to help members build a learning group where they can examine and learn from their own experience is a complicated process. The trainer has to help the group identify what is occurring (but not determine it) and assist the members to grapple with and learn from the major issues (but not force the outcome).

Not only is this task more complicated than in the traditional classroom or training workshop (where goals and processes have been clearly delineated beforehand), but the power held by teachers and workshop leaders is removed in the T-group. Regardless of whether the group has an interpersonal or group focus, the formal authority to set the agenda, guide the discussion, and determine the procedures is in the hands of the group, not the trainer. Furthermore, the trainer does not hold the high degree of expertise power of a teacher or workshop leader since the group can and should be encouraged to rely on its own evidence. Although this undercuts participants' reliance on an authority for determining 'the answer', it does not necessarily decrease the trainer's feelings of personal responsibility for the success of the group. The trainer may say 'this is our group' and 'we have shared responsibility for its success', - but nevertheless members look to the trainer for answers, and the trainer in turn frequently feels special responsibility for the outcome.

Thus the primary concern of the beginning trainer is that of survival. 'How am I going to open the group meeting?' 'How will I answer when they say 'You've been through this before, what should we be doing?'" "How do I respond when people question my competence?" Beginning trainers frequently desire a cognitive theory of training, a clear description of the trainer's role, a set of predetermined goals and objectives, a list of interventions and exercises, and sure fire responses to the dozen of dilemmas they fear will occur. These concerns are legitimate since participants are perplexed about how to behave in this strange type of group and naturally will turn to the trainer for answers.

I believe it is a legitimate and important function of the supervising trainer to provide a cognitive map of this strange and forbidding territory. At first I found it difficult to respond to the needs of the novice trainer for solutions. When asked how to handle certain situations, I would respond that 'it depends' and then list a dozen contingencies that I use in determining my response. But it soon became clear that I was moving too far too fast. After all, the process of education should complicate the learner's world only to the point where the complexities can be integrated, and not further. Then, at a later time when more knowledge can be given, what were truths now become cliches. While definitive answers to all training problems cannot be given, the supervising trainer can provide a boundary as to what are, and are not, the major characteristics of a T-group (as contrasted with a traditional classroom discussion section or a therapy group), a rough description of the trainer's role (as contrasted with that of participant, process observer, or traditional task leader), and a set of suggested norms and procedures that have worked well in the past.

In addition to providing useful information, such knowledge also gives a necessary reassurance. People do not operate at their best under excessive anxiety and the starting trainer needs this information to keep the stress level low enough to be able to use other internal resources. Such support to the trainer is also necessary if members are to maximise their learning. It is unrealistic to expect high involvement and personal risk-taking from participants if they feel their trainers do not know what they are doing.

The first stage then is a process of learning the role of trainer. How should one act? What should one do (and not do)? What are the areas of responsibility? After more than 30 years of experimenting, the field has developed a vast amount of knowledge that can be quickly transmitted but would take years to learn on one's own. In this first stage, trainers 'should be well grounded in the research and theory of the behavioural sciences, have a well-developed theory of the training process, have a range of intervention skills (including the ability to develop and conduct different types of structured and unstructured exercises), and be able to design different laboratories for different learning populations.

In addition to acquiring this cognitive knowledge about training and the behavioural sciences it is also important in this first stage to help trainers identify their own personal 'Theory' of training. I believe that all of us develop our own theory based more on experience than on formal instruction. We develop a set of assumptions about individual, interpersonal, and group behaviour. In most cases this theory is more implicit than explicit and reflected more in our behaviour than in our verbal statements. It is important that our 'theory-in-use' be made explicit so that it can be examined for flaws, discrepancies, and internal contradictions. It can also be examined to see what assumptions we are making about others based on their sex, race, and age. As our society struggles with issues of sexism, racism, and ageism, it is important that we, as change agents, make conscious our assumptions and preconceptions on these issues.

Finally, from the beginning the trainers should become increasingly in touch with their feelings. Because of the central role that emotions play in the learning process, trainers need to understand not only what their own feelings are but how to use them as interventions. Learning about emotions and learning about training theory can be closely intertwined. I have found that one of the best ways to learn content is through exploration of feelings. By asking developing trainers how they felt about particular incidents in their group, the supervising trainer can then examine how expressing (or not expressing) that emotion is congruent with the theory. But even when the trainers in Stage I use their feelings, it is usually very much of a cognitive process. The trainers try to understand the feelings, think about how that fits in with the dynamics of the group, and then decide whether or not to share these emotions. It is still too early in their development to automatically trust their internal responses.

For all those reasons, the first stage is not one for trainers to hurry through. In fact, for many types of learning situations there is little need to move beyond Stage I. If one is conducting a rather structured programme with lectures interspersed with exercises, then the knowledge and skills described in the first stage would be sufficient. Also, even in an unstructured T-group, trainers with this approach can do an effective job in helping participants learn. (In fact, some top trainers, particularly those who learnt in the early years of training before emotionality was as highly stressed as is presently the case, operate primarily out of this conceptual mode.) Thus trainers should not feel stigmatised for staying in Stage I if they make full use of their knowledge. To be able to understand cognitively the various interpersonal and group phenomena occurring in a T-group is indeed a valuable skill. Trainers who develop within this stage can become increasingly perceptive about the internal dynamics of the group (as well as their own internal reactions) and use that awareness to determine what interventions are most appropriate.

Benefits from Stage I

This knowledge can expand the world of the beginning trainers. Most people initially view behaviour in the group as deriving from 'personality' factors ('he is uptight', 'she is willing to take risks,' 'she has a hard time with anger'), completely ignoring interpersonal forces (e.g., how one person's self-disclosure is influenced by another's). Even more rare for the beginning trainer is the ability to perceive on the group level of analysis. But to be able to understand how the group's dynamics (norms and standards, leadership and power, stages of development, etc.) influence individual behaviour is to begin to understand fully the world of the T-group. Theories, concepts, and categories can provide the cognitive glasses which allow the beginning trainer to see so much more and thus be able to make sense out of the vast array of data that is constantly being produced within the T-group. Unless trainers can begin to observe and understand the experiences within the group, they will be severely limited in building a laboratory where participants can learn from their experience.

This cognitive understanding also assists the trainer in helping participants generalise their learning to other settings. A T-group may be a 'cultural island', but unless participants can understand how to transfer the lessons from the T-group to their work or home, there is little of lasting value from the experience. Making that transfer requires, for example, that the trainer have an appreciation of family and organisational dynamics. Just as there are many types of successful marriages (other than the intense 'everything is shared and we are constantly growing together' form), so too there are a variety of ways to operate successfully in the organisational world. Unfortunately, many trainers have an overly simplistic view of the way organisations should be. Leadership should be Theory Y; decision-making should be participative; relationships should be collaborative; and one should be open and trusting. But practitioners know that the desired world (let alone the present one) is more complex. There are times for participation and times for autonomous decision-making, times for collaboration and times for competition, times to trust and times to be guarded. What we, as behavioural scientists, have to offer is a knowledge of the conditions under which each is appropriate. But insofar as we have stunted our own cognitive development, we are limited in helping participants make the connection between what they have learned in the T-group and how it can be applied to other settings.

A cognitive understanding of the training process also provides the criteria for trainers to assess success (and therefore their own personal competence). Without a sophisticated understanding of the various ways people learn (and the even more varied types of learning a T-group can provide), it is too easy for trainers to use members' approval as a measure of how well they are doing (which can hinder the trainer's willingness to take personal risks or confront). Or the measure can be the number of new and flashy exercises and interventions used. Schutz (1971) has nicely captured this dilemma:

I fear being dull, repetitive, and disappointing to people . . . This leads me to sometimes overdo flamboyance or to be over dramatic. I feel a desire to be always new, original, and to not do things like other group leaders, even including not doing things like in my own book Joy. This does have the virtue of impelling me onward toward new things, but there is a somewhat compulsive quality about it that I find I must fight. It comes up when people are just talking in the group. Even though talking may be exactly the right thing to do at that point, I feel some push that must be suppressed to make the actions more exciting. Often fantasies of the Flying Circus members intrude here, thoughts that they would be doing something more dramatic, and I'm just going back to my old, tired, T-group . . . techniques. (p.228).

There can also be the danger of using emotionality as a measure of success. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, of two trainers who were running groups in a growth centre in Southern California. Meeting in the hall after their sessions, one said: 'My group went very well today; three people cried.' His colleague responded: 'That's nothing, one of mine threw up.' While it may be difficult to have groups where significant learning occurs without much feeling, it is certainly possible to have high emotionality without much learning.

Problems in Stage I

What happens when Stage I is slighted? One common outcome is for the trainer not to treat the group as a learning laboratory but as a workshop to learn specific skills. If the trainers' limited awareness prevents them from appreciating all that is occurring within the group, they tend to turn to gimmicks. Rather than being able to recognise and utilise the group's inherent complexity, they think they must add complexity through new types of exercises, activities, and interventions. An extreme example is a trainer I know, who has a travelling van complete with games, records, a portable massage-table, pillows, musical instruments, and bongo drums! Although entertaining, does this approach really help participants learn from their own experience?

Conversely, problems can emerge for the trainer who does develop fully in Stage I. Although a conceptual understanding can be a powerful approach, it is analogous to one channel in a stereo system. Since one of the overall goals of laboratory education is to help participants discover how they can be 'more themselves', it is poor modelling to have trainers constantly in their head (even though such conceptual statements may include reports of the trainer's emotions). Participants are faced with the incongruity between the trainer's verbal statements and the trainer's behaviour. ('Should I act more spontaneously as the trainer suggests or should I think things through ahead of time as the trainer does?') Furthermore, as rich as words are, participants can often gain a greater understanding of new behaviour by seeing it demonstrated by the trainers.

A second difficulty with using only one channel of the stereo is that it can overload the system. The events that are occurring between members of a group (and the resultant feelings within the trainer) are many and varied. How is the trainer to determine which ones are central and 'which ones peripheral? No matter how knowledgeable and self-aware the trainer might be, the ability to think logically through all that might be occurring is very difficult. Not only can this lead to a mechanical 'doing it by the book' style of training, but it throws off timing because often we can intuit long before we can cognitively understand.

In a sense, Stage I trainers are a victim of their own success. The problem of being overloaded with options and knowing how to select among the alternatives increases the more the trainer has learned. But successful completion of the first stage can provide the support for moving on. Having as a base of strength increased confidence about their abilities, trainers may be willing to take risks that would have been overwhelming before. They now know that the lessons have been well enough learned to be recalled in an emergency.

Perhaps co-training with a senior trainer who gives permission to 'be more oneself' may be the stimulus that leads the trainer to venture into Stage II. Others may decide to move after being confronted by participants with the discrepancy between their advice to members and their own behaviour in the group. For still others, the stimulus may come from experiencing increasing dissatisfaction with the limits of training as a role. This can occur in the situation when the developing trainer begins to experience all the rules and theory not as enabling, but as constraining. An example is the trainer who after a group session bemoans the fact

that the role has kept him from really saying what is on his mind. 'Boy, if only I were a participant, would I tell Joe exactly how I feel.' One of the ways to help such a trainer move on to Stage II is to assist him in exploring what he would say. Assuming that the trainer stuck with feelings (and did not give an interpretation of the other person's motives or intentions), it usually turns out that the feelings would be the perfect intervention.

The transition to Stage II is not an easy one. Up to that point, the trainer has relied on theory and sets of rules to determine appropriate behaviour. Often this cognitive map has included the messages not to be too intrusive, not to get in the way of the process, not to do the group's work for it. Now, the trainer is told to 'listen to oneself, respond to one's feelings, be spontaneous, don't think through everything ahead of time'. Not only is this a rather fundamental shift in orientation but it removes the security that the cognitive map provides. Now the trainer is thrown back to an ambiguous and scary world which forces that person into an area of undeveloped competence with increased vulnerability. Little wonder that so many choose not to listen to this suggested change in training style and instead stay in Stage I.

Stage II - Training as being

In the first stage, trainers see leading a group as fulfilling a role, but in this second stage, they see it more as a process of being. This involves trusting oneself and knowing that listening to one's feelings, impulses, reactions, and hunches is likely to be appropriate. It also involves a willingness to be wrong, to make mistakes, and to be 'messy' along with the participants. This trusting of oneself has several related but separate components. One is a greater reliance on expressing emotions. Comments that tend to be more 'I feel rather than queries about what others might be feeling. The second component is an increasing willingness to act impulsively, to speak without thinking through all the possible implications, and to raise an issue even though unsure how it will turn out.

In Stage I the developing trainer could not fully trust the self. Now, in Stage II, trainers internalise the cognitive models they used as a guideline for interventions and rely on the self as the primary resource. This means that the major distinction between the first two stages is not between thoughts and feelings but rather the extent to which one can rely on oneself. In Stage II, the trainer is willing to set aside the conscious cognitive 'quality control' that was developed in the first stage and act on impulse, whether that impulse be to share a thought or a feeling. The second stage is not a rejection of the first stage but rather its internalisation.

The movement towards greater trust of oneself, more reliance on hunches, first impulses, and 'what seems right' is felt as a freeing and exciting process. To find that one's self is not an enemy but an ally, not a burden but a resource, is a powerful discovery. Similarly, to learn that one can show anger without destroying participants, inadequacies without being devalued, needs without controlling the groups, is an exhilarating step.

This process of more fully trusting oneself means more trainer self-disclosure. This disclosure not only includes feelings about members and what is occurring in the group but also sharing of doubts and concerns about performance. These doubts have always existed but during Stage I were more likely to be surfaced outside the group with the co-trainer or the supervisor during post-meeting sessions. Now, with a greater sense of competence, the trainer can risk expressing feelings of low competence! Doing this, however, is often felt as a great risk (as it well can be), and often is done only after much hesitation.

This dilemma was illustrated for me recently by an incident with a friend of mine. Carl is very bright and his tendency to stay at the conceptual level is reinforced by being a professor in academia. The following incident occurred during the Monday evening session of a one-week laboratory. His group was a bit slow getting going and Carl, although impatient to have things develop, held back from providing strong direction, hoping that members would take the initiative. But they waffled through the evening and at the end expressed disappointment with Carl's 'performance' and wondered why the other group was doing so much better. While expressing their dissatisfaction, they also started to share what they wanted from the group and from each other and laid plans for more disclosures in the next meeting. In spite of this, the evening session ended in a decidedly down mood, if not so much for the group members, certainly for Carl.

Carl went back to his room for a drink and solitary contemplation. During those ruminations, he developed an elaborate theory about what was occurring in the group. The more he worked on it, the more excited he became both because of the potential learning for the members and because of the support it provided for his decision to keep quiet. He planned to share this theory in a 15-minute lecture at the beginning of the next morning's group.

At breakfast Carl happened to mention his plans to me. In discussing the previous night, it became clear to

both of us that he was sitting on a lot of emotions: pain, feelings of personal inadequacy, sense of not being appreciated, fear that he had let me down, and competition with the other trainer. Fortunately, upon my urging, Carl agreed not to share his theory but instead to disclose his feelings. With much trepidation, because he did not know what would happen but feared that such disclosure would cost him status, respect and effectiveness in the group, Carl did so. It was exactly what the group needed. His disclosure of feelings deepened the level of intensity, modelled self-disclosure around here-and-now concerns, helped the group explore its own process, and demonstrated (in a laboratory focusing on leadership theory) that competent leaders can express self-doubts and get help from subordinates. Carl, by being willing to take the risk of moving from Stage I to Stage II, became a vastly more effective trainer.

The order of Stages I and II

But why the sequence of first learning a set of rules and then setting them aside to just be oneself? Why not a high degree of spontaneity and sharing of feelings (including feelings of self-doubt and failure) from the beginning? Could not the problems of Stage I be avoided (or at least reduced) if we urged trainers not to see training as a role but as a process of just being themselves?

This would be difficult because each stage deals with different processes. Stage I concerns the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Time is required for such information to be understood, integrated, and assimilated into one's behavioural repertoire. Only when such knowledge is assimilated can a spontaneous utilisation occur. The ability to 'trust thyself' in Stage II can only occur when there is a developed self to trust! Otherwise, if trainers in the initial stage were to listen to impulses and feelings, they would frequently experience a contradiction between what they (and the supervising trainer) thought should be said and their initial impulses.

The reason for the contradiction in Stage I is that the concerns, and therefore the emotions and reactions, of most neophyte trainers, are with themselves: 'Am I doing all right?' 'What do they think of me?' 'What does that person's comment say about my position in the group?' This concern with acceptance, esteem, and influence makes it difficult for the trainer to focus on anybody else. Running through all of this is a preoccupation with doing the job correctly and fear of not being adequate (which are reality-based concerns since these trainers are at the beginning of their professional development). Thus any intervention based on feelings comes out of the trainer's needs rather than those of the group. Such self-disclosure would almost always focus members' attention on the trainer - an alternative most participants would welcome because it removes the attention from them.

A final reason why these first two stages should be separate is that most group members would not react as benignly to an untrained leader who operated only out of personal concerns, as occurred in Carl's group.

Participants are also worried about the process. This anxiety makes them ambivalent about the trainer; while they don't want an omnipotent God, they do want someone upon whom they can rely. Imagine what would happen to members' anxiety level if they perceived their trainer as having little confidence (or competence) and only a preoccupation with personal adequacy. One of the reasons why Carl's disclosure worked so well is that the members had already experienced his high degree of knowledge and training skill.

But there are some developing trainers who do not start with a highly cognitive training style but whose comments from the very beginning come out of their intuition. They respond, when asked why they made a specific intervention, 'because it just felt right'. But even with these trainers, it can be useful to start with a heavy conceptual component in a trainer development programme. Such knowledge helps them understand what they are doing even if they do not (and should not) use that cognitive information as the major determinant of what interventions to make.

Psychological health of the trainer

Clearly the ability to move effectively into Stage II requires that the person be psychologically healthy. We are telling the trainer to internalise the cognitive control and trust the self. But a 'self' that is seriously flawed is a problem, not a resource. If trainers have overly strong needs for acceptance and approval, control and power, intimacy and affection, then it is these needs, not what is occurring within the group, that will determine the trainer's response. An example of this was the case of Paula. Although a licensed counsellor and therapy group leader she found it very difficult to respond accurately on the feeling level to events in the group. She had such strong needs for approval and validation that any confrontation from a member was interpreted by her as indicating non-acceptance. She was a much better trainer when she did not use her feelings but instead relied primarily on her analytical skills and stayed in Stage I.

The thrust of a training-of-trainer programme during Stage II is self-exploration. While additional training theory can always be useful, more crucial is helping trainers develop greater insight into their feelings, their

motives for training, and their 'crazy areas'. By the last, I mean the parts in all of us which, when triggered by an external stimulus, move with their own energy and cause us to overreact. For some of us this may be when our authority is questioned, for others when we do not feel accepted and approved, and for still others when our masculinity/femininity, competence, authenticity, is challenged. The area in which I tend to overrespond is when a person, usually a woman, acts dependent and then blames me when I don't fulfil her expectations - I get hooked and not infrequently react in a rejecting and punishing manner.

Given the power of the role and the fact that the trainers rarely have their own 'trainer' in the group to help them clarify their feelings, if they are to be encouraged to trust and respond to their feelings it is important that they be aware of situations where their reactions should be suspect. A second reason to identify personally loaded issues is that the loading can lead the trainer to over- or under-emphasize such phenomena in the group. There are some trainers whose groups never have conflicts, while other trainers always have a high percentage of 'counterdependent' members. Likewise, there are some trainers whose groups always focus heavily on issues of sexuality, while for others this never seems to be the members' concern. This means that the intensity of the issue is not determined by the extent to which it reflects the members' needs but the trainer's. Again to quote Schutz (1971):

Another phenomenon that is essential to be aware of is the tremendous influence of the leader on the course of the group ... Whatever I was interested in at the moment turned out to be exactly what the group happened to focus on. If I was exploring nonpermanent relations, behold, they were exploring the limits of marriage. When I had just had an insight about the nature of competition, my group were wrestling ... (p.229)

The goal in this self exploration is not for the trainer to resolve all personally loaded areas; that is asking too much. No person, not even the most highly skilled professional, will have all parts in order. Show me a person where that is the case and I will show you a person who has trouble letting go of control and taking personal risks! But at the very least, the trainer should be able to identify these personally troubling issues, know what situations are likely to trigger them, and at such a time be able to move away from trusting impulses and use the more cognitive style developed in Stage I.

This phase of starting to deal with problem areas and aspects of the self has its own excitement. To examine oneself, explore old (perhaps dysfunctional) patterns, reassess values and priorities, and explore new options opens up a new world and is probably the period of greatest personal growth. This self-exploration can know no boundaries. What first started out with an examination of the self in relation to the trainer's role now moves into other aspects of the trainer's life: work; marriage; other relationships; and one's priorities in life. Often 'training can be harmful to your mental health', with work and marital stability frequently the casualties during this period. Insofar as this process is a natural occurrence in Stage II, we can begin to understand why relatively few people are willing to open the dungeon doors of the inner self and fully enter this second stage.

Where best should this personal learning occur? In some cases the trainers can appropriately raise these issues in the group they are leading. This models the learning process for members and shows that learning is a continuous process - even for those who are fully trained. But there is a fine line between working out one's own issues in a way that helps the group and working them out at the expense of the group. The latter necessitates other learning settings.

Clearly one of the most important places can be the trainer development programme itself, particularly if a major component is a trainer's T-group with an intrapersonal, self-exploration focus. Developing trainers who want to work on personal issues are not caught in the bind between 'working the issue' and 'facilitating the process'. Removing the responsibility for being the trainer allows the person to fully grapple with the issue itself. Still other trainers find it useful to make a much more complete commitment to self-development, which may mean participating in personal growth groups, going into therapy, or even temporarily dropping out of training to get their internal house in order. But regardless of the place or manner in which such personal learning occurs, this is the crucial learning task of the second stage.

Problems with Stage II

Assuming that the developing trainer is able to move into Stage II and can effectively train from this modality, what are the dangers and pitfalls that can occur? One is in making the erroneous leap from 'trust yourself' to 'trust yourself at all times on all things'. There is more to training than 'being authentic'. This orientation is particularly dangerous when there are parts of the self that are destructive but the rationalisation of 'I am only being me' serves as a defence against dealing with these dysfunctional parts.

Trainers who move into Stage II can become seduced by the excitement of their personal discoveries and can want to spread the message to the unenlightened. Where in the previous stage the trainer was likely to

say 'do what I say', in this state it can be 'do what I do' - or even 'be what I am'. It is one thing to model another way of relating so that participants have more options than they previously thought, and another to move into the guru stage to convey that this is the only way to be. The former is enabling while the latter is constraining.

An example comes to mind that illustrates this danger. Dan was a mathematician by training who took his first T-group with a great deal of scepticism. The feedback from group members was loud and clear; they told him that his aloof, put-down style impressed no-one, but that the warm, caring Dan that he sometimes let slip out was much more attractive. Another T-group experience followed and then a co-training experience, both of which reinforced his message. Then in the next T-group in which he co-trained, Dan became a 'true believer'. He was constantly coming out of his feelings and pounding others over the head if they did not follow his example. Out of the best of intentions, he wanted others to have the learning he had gained. But in the process his groups changed from being a freeing place where people could discover their own learning to an indoctrination programme - to learn certain predetermined truths.

Trainers who move into Stage II experience a contradiction between what the supervising trainer is presently recommending and what was suggested in Stage I. Previously there was the warning against overcontrolling the group by assuming too much responsibility or doing the group's work for them and against forgetting how potent the trainer's feedback could be to members. Now in Stage II how do trainers handle the possibility that something they say might harm members or be dysfunctional for the group? Rather than living with (and learning how to manage) the tension in this dilemma, some trainers rationalise away the problem by denying the fact of social influence and pushing a belief system that says individuals are totally responsible for what happens to them. An extreme example is the following quote from a trainer who announced at the beginning of a laboratory:

I'd like to state first that, whatever happens, you are responsible for yourself. That is, if during the course of these things you want to become physically injured, then you can do that if you want to; if you want to bow to group pressure you can do that. If you want to not bow to group pressure, you can also do that. But I want to underline clearly at the outset that you are responsible for whatever happens to you here. (Back, 1972. p.226)

Even though it can be a learning for participants to 'take responsibility for their lives', to deny peer pressure and group conformity is to deny reality. This is another example where ideology replaces objective inquiry. Seeing the world in simplistic extreme terms may make training easier but it denies the potential richness of the T-group in learning how to reconcile the sometimes contradictory forces of individual rights and group responsibility.

Another difficulty that can arise in this period of high personal growth is the paradoxical fact that the more successful trainers are in exploring the inner self, the more their 'centredness' may be undermined. The process of exploring new, underdeveloped (or conflicting) aspects can make the 'self' (which is the strength of Stage II) suspect. For example, if the trainer has discovered that acknowledging and expressing anger is a 'crazy area' and starts to explore the reasons why that is the case, he or she is likely to see anger in most situations. Furthermore, being in the middle of experimenting with how to express negative feelings can lead to responses that are too extreme. Thus the process of dealing with one's self may make that self a less reliable resource.

Another problem I sometimes see in Stage II is the paradox of 'constant exploration to avoid the self'. These are trainers who appear to be growing and experimenting, but each year sees a new technique, a new theory, that is championed as the answer. Such people throw themselves into the new approach and say that they are gaining great personal learning in the process, but I am left with the impression that such individuals are no closer to their core issues than they were before. The involvement with the cause prevents an involvement with the self; again an example of adding on complexity rather than moving into one's own simple, yet basic, essence.

How can these potential problems be handled? Are they inevitable or can precautionary measures be taken that will lessen their severity? Clearly, an important safeguard is to have a core part of the Stage II training-of-trainer programme contain a learning setting where the developing trainer can raise these issues. Trainers working them through with their peers (and under the guidance of a senior staff member) can increase the probability of successful resolution without the danger of damage to participants in their T-group. Another safeguard is for the trainer to be sure to utilise the inquiry model in the T-group he or she is leading. Such an orientation counters any tendency of the trainer to impose personal values and style on the group since members can now examine how the trainer's message fits the reality they are presently experiencing. Also, a laboratory for learning means that everybody, including the trainer, is open for feedback and confrontation. One of the richnesses of the learning process in a T-group (as compared to a

traditional classroom and a therapy group where there are structural and normative barriers against feedback to the leader) is that the trainer is potentially open to the same process as participants.

Finally, a sophisticated theory of training learned in Stage I can cushion the potential excesses of Stage II. An understanding of individual development indicates that several paths and timetables for learning exist (and not just the one chosen by the trainer). A theory of learning places emphasis on the process (not on any one outcome). Knowledge of group behaviour provides a more complex view of the world by acknowledging interpersonal and group forces in addition to individual dynamics. Finally, a thorough conceptual knowledge can serve as a set of guideposts trainers can use when they are exploring new personal areas and cannot fully trust the self.

Transition to Stage III

What leads the trainer to make the transition from Stage II to Stage III? As with the first transition, there can be many reasons. The trainer can grow satiated on such a rich diet of constant personal growth. Or many of the trainer's personal issues may be reaching resolution and he seeks a balance to put the personal into perspective with the conceptual. But a third cause is similar to what happened previously: the learning in Stage II has provided such a rich complexity that now a simplifying mechanism is needed. The very success of Stage II has provided an awareness of the vast array of possible emotional responses - so vast that the trainer can no longer just 'listen to his guts'.

This last point refers to the case where a specific incident produces many rather than just a few emotional responses. For example, let us take the situation in which the group has been progressing slowly, members have not been disclosing their reactions, and the trainer has several times unsuccessfully intervened. About two-thirds of the way through the session a member who has systematically blocked any explorations of feelings by other members accuses the trainer of not performing adequately. Think of the range of reactions that trainer is likely to have: defensiveness at being attacked; anger that it was this specific person, of all people, to make that point; annoyance at other members for their complacency; feelings of inadequacy for not having been able 'to do magic'; competitiveness with the other trainer whose 'group is doing better'; worry at what the supervising trainer will say upon hearing of this incident; fear of being rejected by the group; concern that fully expressing the anger will blast the attacker away - and most of all a lot of pain!

Now what should the trainer say? If we answer 'trust yourself', which of these many parts is the trainer to trust? If the person shares everything at one time, it will be overwhelming to the group. As with the first stage, the very success of Stage II has produced such increasing complexity that the trainer is again in need of a simplifying decision mechanism.

Stage III - Training as process

The third stage is difficult to describe so the reader will have to bear with me as I try to tease out its essence. Initially it is felt as a synthesis between the cognitive and the emotional and between the controlled and spontaneous. This may be felt, internally, as a dialogue between the parts with neither dominant for long. A thought is checked against a feeling, a hunch is analysed, a spontaneous act examined, an emotional state explored. Sometimes this dialogue is carried out publicly, more frequently privately, and probably most commonly at a preconscious level.

But Stage III is more than just a balance, an integration, of the two preceding stages. In both Stage I and Stage II the trainers were focusing on themselves: in the first stage on their cognitive processes and in the second stage on the intuitive. But in the third stage the trainer is able to move beyond focusing on the self and can pay primary attention to the process. It is now the process (what is happening between individuals and in the group itself) that determines the trainer's response. The trainer reacts rather than acting because of his/her reactions. The self (both cognitively and emotionally) has now become so fully developed that it can be largely forgotten - the trainer can become truly selfless because the self has been previously attended to. The trainer does not have to say: 'What am I thinking?' 'What am I feeling?' 'What should I do now?' 'How am I reacting to what is occurring?' Instead - the attention can be on the group and on the interaction among the members.

Let me try some analogies to explain. The first stage saw the trainer as conductor - standing away from the events and doing things to members to make things happen. The trainer 'helps', 'enables', 'causes', 'facilitates', 'unfreezes', and 'produces'. All of these are important and valuable acts but all are of an instrumental nature. In the second stage, the trainer is in the middle of the river - splashing around, urging others in, showing them that the water is not that deep nor the current that fast. But in the third stage it is the river, not the trainer, that is central. The river will flow regardless of what the trainer does, and the task of the trainer is to assist - not produce - that flow. This may mean gently drifting with it, moving slightly

ahead to point out the way, assisting participants in removing a log that is slowing progress, pointing out different beds the current can flow in so that members can decide the appropriate channel for them in this third stage, the trainer is not larger than life - as was the case in the two preceding stages - but part of life itself.

In placing the group's process as the dominant focus, the trainer uses himself or herself (both cognitively and emotionally) to help that process develop. This may mean keeping out of the way and letting the current flow by itself or making a simple comment that helps clarify what is occurring. It may mean pointing out the dilemma the group is wrestling with or sharing some feelings that allow others to understand their own emotions. It is truly a 'facilitating' role. The advantage of having the process dominant is that it is the best way to make sure the T-group will be a learning laboratory. If the trainer can truly stay with the process and not determine it, then the emergent learnings will result from the members' interactions.

Naturally, such a condition is not easy and requires a thorough development of the preceding two stages. It also demands a high degree of psychological health and self-awareness, more so than in Stage II. In the second stage, personal needs had to be dealt with so that they would not seriously distort the trainer's reactions. But in the third stage, the trainer has to be further centred so that he or she does not use the group as an important source of personal gratification. One has to satisfy needs for acceptance, approval, prominence, influence, and affection elsewhere. It also means that the trainer has to be willing to let go of control, to be willing to let the group develop out of the members' interactions. Now that is not to deny that trainers have needs in the group nor that they would be bothered if attacked, disapproved of or rejected. What I am saying is that the trainer has to have such needs well enough resolved not to control the process. If they do come up as issues in the group it is because the process has provoked them, not the trainer.

This ability to be congruent with the process appears similar to Massarik's (1972) definition of the Utopian training state where a perfect correspondence exists between the trainer's needs and the needs of the group. While Massarik points out that such a condition is not possible, I want to go a step further and claim it is not desirable! To seek perfect correspondence between one individual and the dynamics produced by 12 interacting others is to lose one's individuality (which is hardly an attractive role model for participants). If one of the desired outcomes is to build a group where members' differences and uniquenesses can be expressed and accepted, then the trainer and members' need to learn how to manage the dynamic tension that is constantly occurring between the needs' of the individuals and the requirements of the group.

As I observe trainers in this stage, most of the time they are very congruent with what is occurring in the group. They become part of the process rather than force the process to fit the trainer. This congruence may have occurred in Stage I by the trainer wrenching the group from its present activity and turning it 90 degrees in another direction to fit what the trainer thought was the appropriate path. Congruence was achieved in Stage II as the group followed the trainer's personal path. In Stage III it is the trainer who is following the process - not producing it. Now this congruence does not mean that the trainer is totally immersed in the process. Instead a sense of 'detached involvement' exists which has evolved from the two preceding stages: an involvement from Stage II because one's self and one's feelings are in tune with the group, and a slight detachment from Stage I because the knowledge allows perspective.

Another characteristic I observe in Stage III trainers is a greater sense of authenticity, of humanness if you will. This is in contrast to the analytical nature of Stage I and the 'guruness' of Stage II. Some of the excesses found in the two preceding stages have been modulated. Comments are short, to the point, and lack the jargon frequently found before. A better sense of perspective develops: a realisation that T-group training will neither save the world nor cause radical transformations of all members. This produces a lighter tone. Interventions are not felt as such but more as comments made by somebody perhaps more knowledgeable and skilled than the participants but still of the same flesh and blood. Best of all, congruence develops between being a trainer and the rest of one's life. Training is not seen as a role to be enacted or a religion to be embraced.

Difficulties with Stage III

I do not want to imply that Stage III is the point of completion, the stage where one has 'arrived'. This is not a state where all issues are resolved and the trainer has but to relax and be. One of the greatest difficulties I find is concurrently caring what happens in the group but staying detached enough to give up controlling the group's direction. In the previous states, the trainer was frequently in control, although such control was often subtly expressed. Trainers in Stage I had a conceptual map of how the group should act and where it should move. Trainers in Stage II, had a personal form of control, believing that 'as I go, so goes the group'. But in trusting the process, trainers become naked for they give up trying to predict or influence the future and instead stay fully in the present. Golden (1972) has vividly captured these concerns:

Each training group is for me like another combat flying mission, another encounter with the contingencies of the firing line. I sweat out each group because I am never really certain of myself. I do not know definitely whether my being present in a group serves any genuine purpose. Often during a group, I experience feelings of loneliness, uncertainty, and inadequacy. A training group in a sense is a happening and so is flying at the critical moment. All the planning one has done, all the skill one has developed, all the conceptualisations of strategies may or may not prove adequate to the situation one faces. Indeed there are times when I say to myself, 'Why are you taking on this responsibility? Do you know what you are getting into? Who do you think you are, God?' And similarly, at other points in the process, I find myself asking, 'What are you doing? Where is your blueprint? Are you aware that you are letting it happen and that you seem to have no plan or strategy? Come on, face it. Just what do you do in a group?' (p.14).

I had an experience recently that painfully brought to my attention the difficulty of staying fully with the group and the cost when I impose my own process. It was in the T-group course that we teach a Stanford. The class is composed of 36 students divided into three groups that each week meet twice in class plus one evening session. Two-thirds of the way through the 10-week term the class goes off campus for an intensive weekend where professional trainers are brought in to lead the group.

The group that I was to join had been bogged down in the last two weeks with a major conflict between AI and the rest of the group. AI was constantly in his head making cognitive observations about the interactions in the group. Even though he wanted to be helpful, his comments were often felt as judgemental and not at all self-revealing. The group had several times given him such feedback but AI swatted each comment away with a logical justification of his position. This cycle of feedback - defensive response - further feedback had continued until AI felt isolated, rejected, and misunderstood (but would not acknowledge any of those feelings). These reactions were based on reality, because several group members, when they found that I was to be their trainer, told me that if AI made another of his defensive comments they were ready to ask him to leave the group.

Even before the weekend started, I was wishing it were over. I had a thousand things to do in the office and a friend of mine was very sick. I was not looking forward to the emotional involvement that I knew was likely to occur, but I had a job to do and set off the the weekend resigned to my responsibilities as a trainer.

True to form, 20 minutes into the first session on Friday night, AI attacked the group for their lack of caring and perceptiveness. This was countered with a vicious attack by two members and then silence. As this was going on, I was forcing myself to empathise both with AI and with his attackers. What must AI be feeling since he was thinking he was trying to help the group and only getting rejected in return? How frustrated the other members must feel being bogged down and fearing that the weekend was going to be wasted in this useless cycle of attack and defence. I used my knowledge and feelings to get AI and others into their emotions so that in 20 minutes, through a process of asking questions, sharing my feelings, making several perceptive cognitive clarification statements, I was able to have the issues cleanly on the table. AI finally realised and expressed his feelings of hurt and others were able to hear and empathise with him. AI and another were crying, and the issue was soon resolved. Veritably I had done magic - and in the process ruined the group for the weekend!

There was little energy in the group during the next two days. While members raised important issues which led to many valuable learnings, most of this was at a cognitive, analytical level. None of us left the weekend with high feelings of excitement or of personal satisfaction. It was only in next week's evening meeting that the members discovered what had occurred. After they had struggled for two weeks with this problem and been ready to give it up as hopeless, I had come in and solved it in 20 minutes. What a personal defeat and how inadequate it made them feel! In addition to producing feelings of low interpersonal competence, I had robbed them of the opportunity to develop their skills in resolving the problem. Instead, the meta-learning I provided was that one needed an expert around.

What went wrong? On the surface, it was a model of skilful trainer intervention because I had, through sharing my feelings and using my cognitive knowledge, resolved an issue that was blocking the group. Not one of my comments was irrelevant; the statements were a model of brevity, pinpointed the problem, and helped the group move. Why is this not desired training? The answer, obviously, is that I confused the journey with the destination. What was important was not only that this problem be resolved so that the group could progress, but that members learn how they got into that dilemma in the first place and then learn how they could get out. I completely by-passed their learning needs and instead focused on problem resolution. I moved too far ahead, ignored the process, and forced them to follow the path I was initiating.

When one has been through numerous groups, it can be an easy trap to use one's knowledge and skills to move too quickly towards the destination and forget that the crucial learning arises from an examination of

the journey. (This is a particularly likely trap for the trainer who stops seeing a T-group as a laboratory for learning and instead sees it only as a skill training activity.) But if the trainer can focus on the process, there can be the realisation that it is the struggle that is paramount. Trainer may realise the value of expressing feelings, but it is the participant taking the risk of trying this out and testing the validity of the concept that is important. What the trainer needs to do is support the participant in that struggle, not determine the outcome for that person.

Even within Stage III there is a developmental process. But while the development in the two preceding stages was towards increased complexity the development in Stage III is towards increased simplicity. At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that the process in a T-group is disarmingly simple. For example in many cases the basic but most difficult, learning is how to relate in a more authentic fashion. 'How can I just share myself?' 'How can I say what I want, for me?' 'How can I reach out to you?' - these are all very simple, basic acts (that any six year old can bring off but which are difficult for us as sophisticated adults, living in a sophisticated world). What the trainer learns in Stage III is how to help participants find their own answers to these basic questions. He or she learns how to use the vast reservoir of knowledge, skills, and self-awareness to become increasingly direct, and almost primitive, in his or her interactions.

The discussion thus far has carried the implication of three distinct stages. But, in reality, a great deal of overlap exists between these three. Even in Stage I trainers are attempting to identify and express emotions (even though the decision of which ones to express is frequently a cognitive process). Likewise Stage II is not a state of constant impulsivity, and, as I have pointed out, Stage III is not one of perfect congruence. In any one of these stages trainers may be operating primarily out of their theory of training, out of their intuition, out of following the process. Effective trainers use all three and have the flexibility to move back and forth as the situation requires.

The second point to keep in mind is that implicit in the discussion of these three stages are clear value preferences. Almost everybody would prefer to be in the second stage rather than the first, and the third stage rather than the second. This can lead the developing trainer to pass quickly through these preceding stages (or pretend to be in Stage III when that is not the case). Yet each stage has crucial learnings that many trainers have not fully absorbed. Supervising trainers have to spend as much time slowing people down in their rush to 'become professional' as they have to help people develop from one point to the next.

Implications of this Model

Conditions for trainer excellence

I think this way of conceptualising the trainer development process helps explain why, given the many thousands of people who lead experientially based groups, there are only a few hundred that are truly excellent. With all the cognitive, skill and personal knowledge that training demands, it is little surprise that relatively few people are able or willing to make the journey. Without legal requirements to become accredited or having to periodically upgrade one's skills, it is easy to stop by the wayside and rationalise that one has 'arrived' when that is not the case. This is particularly easy in Stage II, when trainers can do magic to produce adoration and acclaim.) This it is unreasonable to expect that the quality of the field will advance if we rely solely on people's desire to learn.

This model of trainer development can also explain why there has never been a fully developed training-of-trainer programme. Such a programme would have to last over several years (with quite intensive mentor contact over that period), would have to be quite differentiated in terms of allowing people to progress at different rates, and would probably be prohibitively expensive. While more attention should be paid to providing quality training programmes for people at different stages in their career, this alternative, by itself, will not solve the problem of developing excellent trainers.

The third alternative, in addition to individuals planning their own development and formal training programmes, would be an apprenticeship model. This is a frequent approach and allows the individualised attention that provides personal learning. The drawback can be in having only one role model. That condition can lead the apprentice to be 'made in the master's image', which can also make the mentor less objective and critical. Ideally several models would be available because learners have different needs at different stages of their development. A friend of mine mentioned the following important differences in his two mentors:

While both were superb, the trainer who was in Stage One was easier for me to learn from initially because her model was clear, her interactions definable and reproducible, her goals easy to conceptualise and she taught it well. As a beginner, I saw the Stage Three person as being almost a magician. I watched what she did but couldn't apply it. It was only later I could begin to learn from

her. Her moves all came out of incredible perceptiveness of the group (an intuitive integration of the cues, awareness of feelings in herself and the group) none of which she conceptualised until later.

Perhaps the solution to the problem of how to develop quality trainers is not to rely on any one of these three approaches but to realise that while all three are necessary, no one is sufficient. There is the need for several mentors who can demonstrate an array of approaches and also can give personal attention, feedback, and support. There is the need for standardised programmes that provide a heavy dose of conceptual and skill development and, by bringing together a number of learners, can provide peer feedback. And there is the need for trainers to see learning as a continuous process and not to equate completion of a certain training programme with completion of their learning.

There are a few signs that trainers and organisations are acting on the last orientation that learning for professionals is continuous. IAASS has a review process every three years for members who are accredited, NTL Institute has recently introduced a few advanced programmes just for its professional membership, and individual trainers have frequently attended various advanced growth programmes on their own. While important steps, these are still a far cry from a strong norm that expects all trainers to assess their learning needs on a regular basis and to seek feedback from colleagues about their strengths and weaknesses. Also needed is a norm that makes it appropriate for professionals to confront each other. Too frequently we avoid confronting colleagues on their behaviour by defining collegial support as staying silent with the excuse that 'everybody has his own style'. Of course, it is one thing to say that such norms should be developed and another be able to do so. But if our business is being able to build learning settings where interpersonal feedback can occur, it would do no harm if the training field were to treat itself as the client!

Thus, part of my trainer development, be it a mentor relationship or a more standardised workshop, should contain constant and clear feedback to developing and developed professionals on the present limitations of their style. I cringe when I think that most participants after a two-week trainer development programme will go out to lead groups. While they may do so irrespective of what we say, it is unethical to give them false confidence. We can both reduce their pain from future training disasters and lessen the potential damage to participants by giving clear feedback on the type of training they should and should not consider, the areas they are likely to have trouble with, and further development they should undertake. It may be necessary to suggest to some developing trainers that they do not lead an unstructured T-group but stick to more structured workshops, or to suggest to others that they consider not training at all until they are able to resolve certain personal issues. Such feedback is painful but a necessary process for both the supervising staff and the trainers.

One of the reasons why such feedback is difficult is because participants frequently come to a training of trainers programme as much for validation as for learning. Certainly they wish to acquire new theory and some techniques (particularly if those can be acquired easily without making them vulnerable) but frequently they also want to find out how good they are. These conflicting forces have always existed but the tension increases the further the trainer progresses. Not only is the training role more central to the experienced trainer's occupational self identity but personal self identity is now involved.

This need for validation can interfere with learning. It is indeed difficult to explore new areas, be willing to look at one's mistakes, and be open to inadequacies when the learner wants a guarantee of success ahead of time. This means that the participant processes each activity on two levels: the first is the specific learning contained in that activity (which the developing trainer is more willing to learn from) and the second is the more general conclusion about present and future competence (which is more strongly resisted). It is one thing to learn four ways to handle personal attack, but what if the developing trainer discovers basic personality difficulties with anger? It is crucial, however, that participants receive feedback on the more general as well as the specific level.

Who should train

This model of trainer development also provides clues as to the person who should be encouraged to go into training. What are the characteristics of a potentially effective trainer? Obviously, a necessary but not sufficient condition is high intelligence. If one is to be able to handle all the relevant knowledge about personal, interpersonal, and group process, then a high degree of intellectual skill is necessary. We are talking about intelligence, not knowledge. The latter can be increased while the former is fixed. Thus I pay less attention to people's previous knowledge or skill level if I feel that they have the ability and interest to learn.

While the ability to learn is important, equally necessary is the potential for self-awareness (and the ability to use that awareness). Again, I pay less attention to the extent to which the novice trainer is presently in touch with and expresses his or her feelings and am more concerned with the potential. There are several

reasons for this. First, not infrequently there are cases where the person who appears to be the ideal participant turns out to be far from the ideal trainer. What led to high self-disclosure, awareness of own feeling willingness to take risks as a participant, came out of some non-healthy dynamics.

Nancy is an example. Basically she is a very lonely woman whose self-esteem is highly dependent on the approval of others. (This condition is not helped by the fact that she is going through some severe marital and work readjustments.) Recently she participated as a member in a group in which she was 'the star of the group' (as reported by her and the trainer). She was constantly in her feelings, pushing herself into some painful areas and confronting others. As she was doing this, she received increasing approval from the trainer and other group members which led to even fuller self-disclosure and risk-taking. At the end of the session, the trainer was so impressed with Nancy that he asked her to co-train in the next group. One shudders to think how her needs for acceptance and approval will interfere with her ability to be an effective trainer.

Another difficulty with using 'being in touch with your feelings' as the major criterion for picking potential trainers is that there are people who might be in touch with themselves but are unwilling to learn further. They feel they have arrived and will do nothing that shakes this self-perception. This unwillingness is not only the worst possible modelling for participants but it also is a good predictor that the trainer will start to see the group as a place to teach predetermined answers rather than a place to explore and discover.

In contrast, there are people who are initially out of touch with their inner state but have the potential for such self discovery (Dan, the mathematician, was one example). Note that there are two components to the criteria being suggested: one is the ability and the other is the willingness. The former refers to not having major personal issues which interfere with the person's willingness to risk self examination. (Paula with her strong needs for acceptance and approval would not put herself in the position of moving into new areas that might lead to personal failure.) Likewise, there are people who are potentially able to learn but unwilling. This unwillingness may come from many sources: a need to be in control and thus difficulty with the ambiguity of a learning situation; a difficulty in giving up the rewards of established behaviour patterns; an unwillingness to suffer the pain and threat that new learning demands; or an unwillingness to have certain values and beliefs questioned. An example of the last is Ralph, who had strong religious convictions that made him unwilling to look at certain values or even to open himself up for treating the group as a laboratory for learning out of fear that the conclusions from any sort of here-and-now data collection might conflict with his beliefs.

But most of all, being willing to look at oneself and one's motives can be very painful. Exploration is not only of weaknesses but also of strengths. Doing either may move a person into new areas, because not infrequently we operate as much out of fear of success as fear of failure. Remember also that the transition from one stage to the next occurs because the trainer has been very successful in the previous stage and is now able to let go. But to be able to give up what has paid off in the past and move into a new and uncharted territory is difficult. Fritz Perls' comment that 'to be willing to suffer one's own death and be reborn is not easy' is as true for trainers as it is for participants! But the process of training demands a repeated willingness to suffer the loss of old approaches, beliefs, and behaviours.

In addition to intelligence and the ability for self-awareness, a third characteristic I look for in potential trainers is their motivation to train. There are many persons who found the first group experience an exciting one and want other such experiences. But they should participate in advanced laboratories, not train. Other people have found 'the answer' and want to spread the gospel to the unenlightened, but 'helping the hell out of others' is a dangerous motivation. Still others have found something in the T-group experience that compensates for what is lacking in their personal life and like the 'groupie' who participates in laboratory after laboratory for a monthly fix, this person needs the group for strong personal reasons. While these reasons are operative to some extent in all of us, if they are the primary source of satisfaction then our potential effectiveness is seriously limited.

The motive I think is most important is the desire to learn. That may sound a reiteration of the second characteristic but the latter dealt with the willingness. One can be receptive without being desirous. The desire to learn concerns the question of the major rewards the trainer receives from leading a group. When this desire is the primary goal, a greater chance exists for the T-group to be a laboratory for learning, a greater chance that the trainer will be open to self-exploration and feedback from others, and a greater chance that the trainer will see learning as a continuous process and not something that stops once one finishes a training programme. But perhaps most important of all, if this desire is primary there will be the willingness to let the process be supreme and to follow where it goes. Only in doing so can one concurrently appreciate the complexity of human interaction and also seek to become more simple, more authentic, and more human in one's training and one's personal life.