

Organizer Training: Fear and Power

Introductions

Lisa: overview of my history and experience

Staff: Name, how many campaigns worked on – less than 3, more than 5, around 10 more than 15?

Intention of Our Work: Create an experience or opportunity to have a deeper understanding of fear and power in order to be more effective in our work as organizers.

Role of Organizer

1. Work with people to experience and move through their fear
2. Work with people to experience and build their power

These are different sides of the same coin and the process for each is integral to the other

Power in this Moment

Before we jump into this, I want people to take a minute and share with the group anything you notice about this very moment. Any observation you have about this room, who is in it, how it is set up, how you feel?

I am in the front, at a podium – implies a certain authority and is the focus of attention. It is vesting a lot of the power in this moment in me. Does this replicate or model other situations you or the workers find themselves in?

What could we do to change this?

Re-arrange the room

Now what do you notice, how do you feel? What is different?

We have removed the obstacles between us and now we look to each other not just me.

We have just exercised some power by re-arranging the situation or dynamics that your bosses have set up

Does it feel more inclusive? How?

Does it feel safer? Why or Why Not?

Image what it would be like if the workers re-arranged the room into a circle like this for a captive audience meeting? What would happen? What might it feel like?

Creating a Container for Our Work

I believe much of our work is rooted in creating – what I call a container – in which to organize...

A space where everyone can be present in the moment.

A space where we pay attention to who is in the room and is isn't.

A space where we make visible our differences including the different power that each of us

holds.

A space where people can feel safe to tell the real story of what they think and feel.

A space where people can explore and practice taking risks

Fear

Is anyone feeling at all uncomfortable in this moment – Can you say why?

Is anyone feeling at all afraid? Of anything in this moment (or related to this work?)

(Lisa – afraid of being judged, of you all thinking who the hell is this woman, etc)

Anyone afraid for their job? Afraid of failing on a campaign? Afraid of being judged)

Would you be more comfortable talking if you boss's were not in the room?

What would the consequence be – they might feel hurt, angry, might create distrust, they would not have the benefit of this experience or knowing more about who you are..

What is different about your Boss and the Boss at a Magna Shop – your boss has the same interests as you!

If we can express what we are afraid of – we have taken the first step to moving through it. We choose to deal with the elephant in the room...If we don't express it, it becomes a ghost – present but unseen, unknown, lurking, haunting us and our work

What is Fear - "expectation with alarm"

You can run away from the thing that scares you or you can empower yourself in your relationship to that object or source of fear..

Fear is largely based on pondering a possible future or the what-if's of the past....whereas the power to make change is in the present... to do so requires a plan.

Fear is often a little voice inside you head that wants you to avoid things that are uncomfortable – confrontation, speaking in public etc etc. That little voice can create monsters in your imaginations

One of the most difficult aspects of fear is the anticipation of what will happen – mostly we stop what we are doing as soon as we start to get afraid. When we push boundaries fear can get worse and worse, more intense till we think we are going to die. The truth is that part of you needs to die in order for you to move beyond this fear – that part yelling in your ear, that feels you need it to survive.

We cling to things the way they are so we don't have to change into who we'd be without it. The truth is you can't know until you go through it and understand that your fear is not keeping you safe. The real obstacle is understanding that fear is often you fighting yourself to avoid changing into your future self..

One way to deal is to break big problems down to little manageable steps and make it a habit of dealing with these little problems one at a time in the present.

Panic is not knowing what to do when you are afraid

Part of our job is creating a space for people to feel comfortable, safe and included where we can deal with the real story of what is going on...

Some steps are to:

- Notice it – express it
- Explore it – what is real, what is imaginary
- Ask Dumb Questions – so what if that happens,
- Make it huge – what is the worst that can happen, then what
- Make a plan –
 - Break it into with simple, small steps
 - Identify what support is needed
- Get Commitment – easy, immediate, short-term task – focus on action to take
- Support Action
- Follow-up

Where there is fear – there is power.....

Power

The ability to Act

Power is also – immediate – in the moment of choice – what we do, why we do it, toward what end.

Kinds and Sources -

Each choice is an opportunity to exercise our power – the power to create a good container in which to do the work....

The power of the story

The power of imagination - imaging re-arraigning the room!

The power to prepare and practice

The power of collective work/action

For Organizer – With worker must be:

- Respectful,
- hard-core and honest with message
- based in reality
- be serious, people's lives are at stake.
- Provide humor, joy, hope and love..

THOUGHTS ABOUT AN ORGANIZERS JOB

- It's about asking the questions, which lead the worker to the information they need to know. This is the first step in workers understanding their own power. They know much more than they think.
- It's about identifying power relationships and how to change them
- Organizing is not about "helping". It's about laying down the challenge and making choices clear.
- We cannot make people decisions for them. We must explain the risk and let them decide.
- People respect you more if you clearly lay out the challenge than if you kiss their ass.

A - Anger

H - Hope
U - Urgency
Y - You can make a difference

We need to use Our Power to Create a Web of Restraint of the Bosses Ability to Generate Fear....

We do this by making the abuse of power visible and public...

The Union is the solution OR Workers taking responsibility for own lives through collective action is the solution and the union