

# Use of Self as an Instrument of Change

*presenters:* Katherine M. Curran, Charles N. Seashore, Ph.D., Michael G. Welp, M.S.

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## Background

Perhaps the most powerful instrument we have in helping our clients navigate change is ourselves. Our ability to use ourselves potentially relies in large part on the level of *awareness* we have about the impact we make, and our ability to make *choices* to direct and modify that impact.

During the workshop, we will use experiential exercises combined with reflection and discussion to provide an opportunity for participants to increase their awareness of themselves as potent instruments of change and to increase their range of options around the use of self. This paper provides a overview of some of the concepts relevant to the use of self. Many of these concepts are depicted on the Mind Map on p. 3 of this paper. The paper also offers an exercise to heighten awareness of some of what may be motivating us when we feel “hooked” by a person or lose our sense of choice, either in a personal or professional setting.

## Awareness

Dimensions of self awareness we can develop when we consult include how we are *present*, how we *influence*, and how we make *contact*. Many writers in the field of organization development address these issues. Some concepts are presented below; others can be found referenced in the annotated bibliography at the end of this paper.

### *Presence*

Nevis (1987) defines presence in terms of consulting work as . . . “the living embodiment of knowledge: the theories and practices believed to be essential to bring about change in people are manifested, symbolized or implied in the presence of the consultant.” It is

. . . the living out of values in such a way that in taking a stance, the intervenor teaches these important concepts. That which is important to the client’s learning process is exuded through the consultant’s way of being. (p. 69-70)

Block (1981) describes authenticity as a dimension of presence and states that one of the most important tasks an OD consultant has is to be authentic and to put into words

what they are experiencing with the client. For Marshak (1990), congruence, an aspect of authenticity, can be defined as acting out of one’s core values and beliefs around change theories, one’s models of individual/group/organization functioning, and one’s beliefs about oneself as a change agent.

### *Influence*

Nevis presents two modes of influence from which a practitioner may choose: evocative and provocative. The evocative mode involves guiding clients’ awareness to what is already happening, with the assumption that a heightened awareness of the current state will produce new learnings, decisions and behavior. A provocative stance involves using a forceful intervention to cause something to happen. An example would be confronting behavior. Any similar intervention that would cause an interruption of what is happening with a call to focus sharply on whatever it is the consultant would like the group to focus on is a provocative intervention.

Blake and Mouton (1983) categorize interventions into different types, ranging from prescriptive through confrontational to catalytic to acceptant. And finally, Hirsch (1993) refers to constructing interventions and communicating in a way to move people’s hearts as well as their minds.

### *Modes of Contact*

Gestalt therapy offers a model called the *cycle of experience* that describes what happens as a person attempts to have a significant interchange with him/herself, another person or a group of people (Nevis; Polster, 1973). The cycle includes the following phases: awareness, energy, action, contact, withdrawal. To have a fully satisfying interchange or to be fully present, all phases need to happen. However, it is possible to block a full experience through specific behaviors called *resistances*, such as projection, introjection, retroflection and confluence. People employ these resistances at different points in the cycle of experience with the result that contact is minimized. The role of Gestalt therapy is to raise resistances to the level of awareness so that more can be learned about them and the potential for choosing differently can be increased.

## Choice

### Getting “Hooked”

Choicefulness about what intervention to make is a key skill of the OD practitioner. However, most of us encounter situations where we get “hooked” by someone’s behavior - we become reactive and lose our ability to choose our responses. Some reflection questions to heighten awareness about this issue are:

- What happens to my ability to choose my behavior when I get “hooked” by something the client says or does?
- How do I know when I am meeting my needs through the intervention vs. meeting the client’s needs?
- Do I know when I am being motivated by an unknown part of myself vs. meeting client needs?
- Or, even if I *know* I’m being motivated by my own needs or by something within me, can I do anything about it?
- Do I know why I want to give feedback in a situation?
- Some of the issues we can be hooked by include: authority, conflict, intimacy, diversity issues, fear, and ego. How do I use myself when I have not resolved all of these issues?

Bates (1991) presents the concept of the unknown self using the Jungian notion of *shadow*, and in a storytelling mode, writes about the necessity of claiming our own shadows. Arrien (1993) expands on this idea in *The Fourfold Way* through her discussion of four paths to leadership, all involving significant reflective work aimed claiming unknown parts of ourselves, and increasing our choicefulness.

Seashore (1992) writes about feedback and the ambivalent role it can play in an interaction. Feedback always describes the giver, not the receiver. Its giving or receiving can be distorted by the presence of any of the hooks mentioned above. It is best given and received when both parties are centered, and not thrown off base by any of their own issues.

### Centering

Heider (1985) writes about methods of staying centered and on base when working with or leading people, adapted from the *Tao Te Ching*. These can be useful in increasing a sense of choicefulness.

## Reflective Exercise: Increasing Awareness and Choicefulness

The following is an exercise that can be done alone, or in an interactive setting where reactions and insights are shared with others.

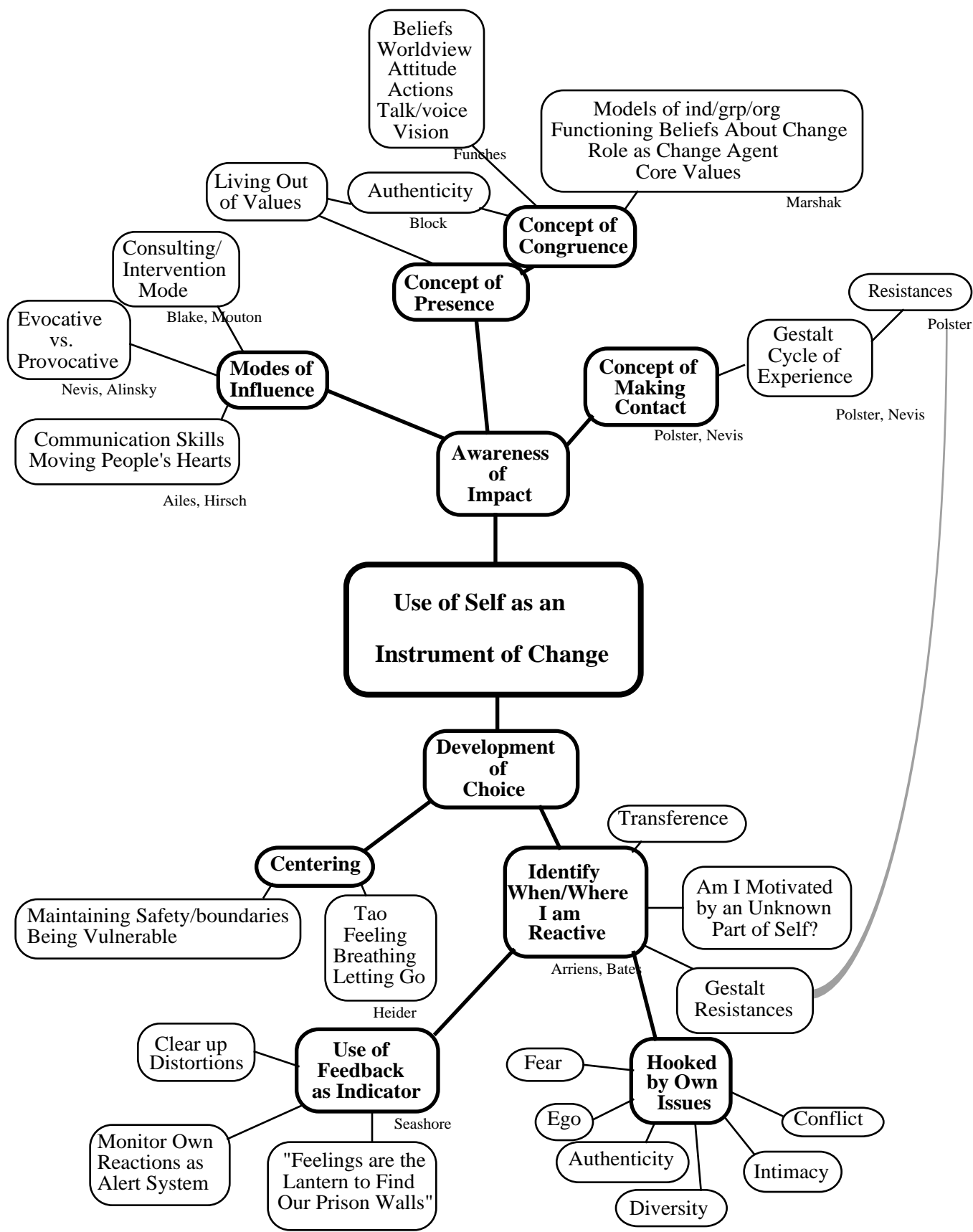
1. On a blank piece of paper, write down the names of the last two or three people by whom you felt hooked. They can be clients, peers, family members, friends, etc.
2. Choose one of the names, and write down any perceptions, feelings and judgments you remember having about the person at the time.
3. Sign your own name to the bottom of the page (as though you were the person about whom those things were allegedly true).
4. Write down any reactions, thoughts, feelings, awarenesses that come to your mind as you look at your list with your name attached.
5. Complete the following sentence about the first judgment on your list:

I forgive you your own name, for being (or doing, or not doing, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ and I love you anyway.

(Example: I forgive you, Kathy, for being controlling and I love you anyway. I forgive you, Kathy, for wanting to have power over others of less rank than you and I love you anyway.)

6. Journal (or talk with another) about whatever feelings, memories, associations come up until the statement no longer feels emotionally loaded to you.
7. Do the same process with the second, third, fourth, etc. judgments on your list.

This exercise stems from the axiom that whenever we feel judgmental or intolerant of another person, it is really an unclaimed part of ourselves that we are judging. What you have basically done is begun to reclaim a projection you have placed on another person. Some projections may be easier to reclaim than others. In many cases, as the projection is reclaimed, we begin to see the “projectee” in a different light and are no longer hooked (or become reactive) when we’re around that person. In other cases we may need to dialogue with another for a while before the hook abates.



Use of Self Mind Map. This is ours; feel free to use it or make your own!

# Annotated Bibliography

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## Biographies

*Katherine M. Curran*, president of Resources for Creative Change, Inc., is a OD consultant in private practice in St. Paul, MN. She works primarily on strategic planning and strategic organization redesign issues for corporate clients. She has extensive background in line management, and has received a Two Year Post Graduate Training Certificate from the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland in Gestalt group process and organization development. She is currently a doctoral student at Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara, CA. She can be reached at (612) 224-2710

*Charles Seashore, Ph.D.*, is a consultant in private practice and a faculty member of American University, Fielding Institute, Johns Hopkins University and the Washington School of Psychiatry. He is the chair of the Board of Directors of NTL Institute. His areas of concentration include: organization development and strategic planning, human relations training, professional development in the applied behavioral sciences, and personal counseling and psychotherapy. Major client groups include hospitals and academic medical centers, government agencies, non-profit organizations and graduate programs in behavioral science. He can be reached at (410)-997-2829.

*Michael Welp, M.S.*, president of Michael Welp Associates, is a consultant in private practice based in Minneapolis, MN. He is a founding board member and staff of Team Builders, Inc., and a senior staff with Outward Bound, for whom he spent time in South Africa facilitating interracial teambuilding for South African corporations. His current interests include team building, issues of diversity and inequality in organizations and polarities/paradoxes in organizations. He received his M.S. from American University/NTL Institute and is a doctoral student in Organization and Systems Development at the Fielding Institute. He can be reached at (612) 722-7610.