

The Baobab Centre
Inspiring potential and growth



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Turning conflict into a catalyst for better team relationships

In the workplace we are often faced with people, conditions or requirements which we find difficult and which lead us into conflict with others. At the Baobab Centre we believe strongly that conflict between individuals and teams can be dissipated and better communication established by encouraging individuals to look at their own ways of being and communicating, and by helping them understand the experiences of the other. This view has been evidenced by the feedback given by people who have been working in teams in conflict and who have attended workshops provided by us.

"As a group we have discussed issues that are normally buried."

"We will take more responsibility for ourselves and be less victim."

"I have a better understanding of the actions of others and how my response can help or ruin a situation."

"Very positive outcome. New ideas and ways of viewing situations."

"Given all individuals the opportunity to look at themselves and their responses to situations and perhaps deal with them more objectively."

"Being able to identify who I am and how I behave. Being able to understand the different behaviours of people..... Feel more confident and able to deal with situations better at work."

"The course was not laid out in stone, it was adapted to our needs."

"Learning that changing myself can enable me to cope better."

The high points for me were "interaction with trainers and the group. The trust and understanding of the trainers."

"I have benefited in a number of ways, both personally from raising my awareness about myself and also looking at the patterns of my behaviour and the behaviour of others and how we relate to each other."

"The openness, directness and honesty from both yourself and Nic.....This was really powerful"

Nic's ten top tips for 2008

1. 'To do' lists are either a great way to prioritise or become a way to hound and harass if you don't manage to tick some tasks off. Try to find simple ways to reward yourself and recognise your achievements.
2. Know your audience. Are you dealing with someone who's preferred mode of communication is visual, auditory or kinesthetic? Are you communicating with someone who is a theorist, activist, reflector or pragmatist?
3. Social norms change with every new idea about society, so who are you really trying to keep up with? Developing our own beliefs and moral strategies are more reliable than the popularist ideas of the moment.
4. Modern technology can speed things up but emotions are very hard to convey in texts and emails - so if you don't get the response you expected, ask yourself if whatever you intended to convey, was actually there to be read?
5. If we don't recognise our own signs of stress how can we help and recognise others in stress? Ask yourself honestly what are your stress signs and what things help to relieve your stress.
6. Bullying will always be around but training, patience, understanding and collaboration will reduce the opportunities for bullying to take place.
7. Judge your ability to manage by how you manage the most difficult situations, and let yourself learn from every new situation you face.
8. Listening is actually hearing what the other person says without problem solving, building defences, making assumptions or comparing to your own experience. If you don't get it, ask for more information.
9. Training is an opportunity to build on what you know, share ideas and to challenge existing beliefs. Look out for barriers to change. Is there a need for the change? Has the message been clearly communicated? Is the initiative well led? Are there opportunities for evaluation? Is the initiative followed through to the end?
10. Getting angry and upset is normal. Find creative ways to vent and acknowledge these emotions and help prevent those emotions leaking out when you least expect or want them to.

Death weekend - feedback from a delegate

"The title of 'death weekend' sounds like a contradiction in terms – who would want to spend a weekend thinking about death! Well the truth is that I have spent many weeks and months thinking about my own death but in a very negative painful way. My mum died just a few months ago and I hoped that the death weekend would address my personal sorrow and I also hoped, without much conviction, that it would stop my long entrenched terror of dying. I want to enjoy my life without the constant anxiety of death looming ahead of me.

The weekend itself was fantastic: stimulating, nurturing, incredibly informative, exhausting, but above all I have now developed some positive thoughts about my death. I have the tools for making dying as positive as I can for my children and me - something that I would never have believed possible a few months ago. I also feel quite proud that I did this for myself and my family. I shared in a really exciting experience with a kind and supportive group of people. Overall I feel I was part of something very special which I will remember for the rest of my life, however long that is..."

At The Baobab Centre we understand how difficult it is for any of us to think about and share our thoughts and fears about death and dying. We believe that providing a safe and structured environment enables people to explore these difficult issues and the feedback from delegates confirmed this view. If you are interested in attending a residential weekend looking at Death and Dying please contact us.

Parenting skills, step-parenting and being a manager

As we have already said we believe that parenting is about giving and modelling love, rules and codes for life. All this is true, of course, for step parents and foster parents with a few other ingredients in the mix. The step or foster parent may also have natural parents in the family frame. This can be a magical bonus or a source of conflict, even competitiveness, at every level. How do you get affirmation, who seeks approval from whom, who sets the tone for the culture in the family?

Are we talking about families or organisations? The similarities are quite incredible, think of your manager or chief, are they the matriarch or patriarch? Are they or any of your senior staff a source of parental-like support, regardless of their age?

Being a successful step or foster parent, like being a successful manager, is about engendering respect in the family unit, by offering consistent and fair care and support, maintaining reasonable boundaries and limits for behaviour; and importantly offering a way of being where the family can learn together, about who they are, how they may wish to develop and what each may offer the others in order to thrive. And like any good family structure there should be space and time for personal reflection as well as opportunities for communion and humour.

Step or foster parenting means you cannot rely on a genetic imperative for survival, you have to build the bonds, come to mutually agreed or at least acceptable ways forward. Of course, there are other less nurturing ways of being a parent or a manager, and these techniques may work for a period of time but they do not often produce self sustaining or freely contributing family or team members.

Our parenting course aims to give you insight into how the parenting role has changed over

time, how society's expectations of parents have changed and it also offers you a chance to review your experiences of being parented.

The course is aimed at all parenting roles, it recognises the nurturing roles that we take on in a range of places including the workplace.

We are planning to run this course in April and May this year. In order to gauge numbers we are inviting people to register their interest.

If you are a parent, a step or foster parent, wish to better communicate with your parents; or notice where you parent others at work and wish to improve upon your skills, and think that this course may be of interest to you, please either email us at office@baobabcentre.com; or phone us on 01904 422733 and we will send out further details including confirmation of the course date.

Please also contact us if you would just like to know more about the course itself.

The Tavistock Institute are undertaking research on behalf of the government pulling together resources for family relationships. We have been involved in this research.

'Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.'

Robert Fulghum

The Baobab Centre currently offer's tailored workshops on *managing stress, understanding bullying, team dynamics, team resilience, change management, managing difficult people and situations, understanding interpersonal relationships, developing listening skills, improving customer service skills.*

And we are extending our range this year. Is there a topic you are interested in which is not in this list? If so, feel free to call us and let us talk about building a programme specifically for your needs.

And lastly, a P.S. from Manar...

Dear Colleague

Happy New Year! We wish you the best for 2008 and would like to thank you for your support during 2007.

It is at this time of year that we are given the opportunity to look back and reflect upon the past year and use our experiences to inform us as we look forward and plan for the year ahead.

For us at the Baobab Centre, just as for many of you, the past year has given us successes and challenges. The building we were using at St. Peter's Grove was sold for development and we had to find alternative offices and counselling rooms. As with many challenges this turned into a positive experience and we are now enjoying accommodation with a wonderful management and reception team, we have plenty of free parking and fewer stairs to climb! Rob Ma'aye, our Marketing and Communications Officer, has moved onto pastures new and is now working in Leeds; on the other hand, Roy Searle has moved back to Northumberland from Northern Ireland and can, therefore, be more involved in supporting all of you, so hold onto your hats and prepare for more 'motivations', leadership training and coaching! We are also delighted to that say that Nic has agreed to increase her days working for the The Baobab Centre to accommodate the increasing demand on her time in business development, coaching, counselling, mediation and training.

We know from experience that peer support and learning is useful to many. We felt, therefore, that you would like to hear from others how different aspects of our services have been of benefit to them in moving forward. We hope that their stories, included in this issue of the newsletter, will encourage you to look creatively at how our services might support you.

To get you thinking about your journey forward this year we hope you have enjoyed 'Nic's Top Ten Tips for 2008'.

It only remains for me to wish you a successful, progressive and fruitful year.

With best regards.



Manar Matusiak

'Of any stopping place in life, it is good to ask whether it will be a good place from which to go on as well as a good place to remain.'

Mary Catherine Bateson'