Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership

A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements

SRILATHA BATLIWALA

MICHEL FRIEDMAN

for CREA

Acknowledgements 4

Introduction 6

Using the TFL Toolkit
A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE 12

MODULE 1
Transformative Feminist Leadership and the Self 26

MODULE 2
Articulating our Politics and Purpose 46

MODULE 3
Articulating our Values and Principles 57

MODULE 4
Working on Personal and Organisational Power 76

Appendix 96

Acknowledgements

On behalf of CREA, I would first of all like to thank Srilatha Batliwala and Michel Friedman, the inspiring and indefatigable authors of this toolkit that we are happy to share with you. *Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements* is based largely on the paper *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*, which was authored by Srilatha and published in 2011 by CREA.

An earlier draft of the toolkit was shared with participants at a CREA workshop on transformative feminist leadership, which took place from 14 to 16 March 2012 in Aurangabad. We are grateful to the participants of this workshop for the discussions we had; their feedback has contributed a great deal to deepening the toolkit. Thanks are also due to Sushma Luthra, without whose adept logistical coordination the workshop would not have been half the success it was. We would also like to thank Preeti Jhangiani for editing the toolkit, and Sherna Dastur for designing its layout.

We are grateful to Oxfam Novib for supporting the publication of this toolkit. Special thanks to Lincie Kusters and Janette Kloosterman for their commitment to this project.

I want to end with a big thank you to my colleagues at CREA, who have contributed in myriad ways to what this toolkit represents. A special thanks to Shalini Singh, who so patiently and thoughtfully coordinated this publication.

This toolkit is intended to serve not just feminist organisations engaged in issues of human rights and social justice, but also organisations that have programs that focus on women, or are led and staffed, wholly or in part, by women. It represents much of what we at CREA have endeavoured to do in our work both within the organisation and with our partners and networks, i.e. bring into focus forms of leadership that encourage – indeed cultivate – an active citizenship and a collective empowerment. With this toolkit, we hope to take another step towards developing individual and organisational leadership practices that are in harmony with a transformative feminist and social justice agenda.

Geetanjali Misra
Executive Director
CREA

Introduction

This toolkit was developed to help individuals and organisations dedicated to advancing a feminist social change agenda—an agenda that believes that all development and social justice must be rooted in gender and social equality. It is based on the assumption that such processes require a different type of leadership, what we may term 'Transformative Feminist Leadership' (TFL). Both feminism and Transformative Feminist Leadership are defined and explained in more detail in the following section (Module 1). The toolkit is based largely on the concept paper entitled "Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud" by Srilatha Batliwala, published by CREA in early 2011. This document (refered to as 'the concept paper' throughout this toolkit) proposed that feminist leadership for social transformation is a 'diamond', comprising four inter-related dimensions—politics purpose; power; principles/values and practices. It further proposed that these four dimensions are practiced, mediated and deeply influenced in specific and unique ways by 'The Self'—the personal histories and experiences of the individual who practices leadership in a given context, at any level of an organisation or movement.

Given the close connection to the concept paper, the toolkit is designed to be used along with the concept paper, rather than as a stand-alone document. However, recognising that not all users will have access to the concept paper, or that some might find the concept paper difficult to grasp, there are links to appropriate sections of the concept paper that will assist users in understanding the rationale behind the modules and exercises.

We realise that leadership is practised by individuals—even if they work in collective leadership structures—and that consequently, each individual brings to the practice of leadership his/her own unique histories, experiences and personalities or what is often termed, 'The Self'. Moreover, as unique beings, we operate from both conscious and unconscious positions. In other words, much of what we do is the result not only of rational factors, but deeply buried emotions and experiences, which is why certain acts by leadership seem to contradict the very values and experiences that the leaders claim to stand for. For example, we may consciously believe in equality, non-discrimination, and democratic decision-making. We may also value each member

in the organisation, but when we feel threatened, emotions from past experiences may rise up and make us behave in an authoritarian, secretive and exclusionary manner. While no toolkit can adequately address these complex unconscious factors, we do offer some 'head' as well as 'heart–spirit' exercises and techniques, to increase awareness of how our feelings influence our practice as well as our thoughts and ideas, and hopefully, get some of our negative energies out of the way.

The main goals of the toolkit are to enable individuals and groups to:

- Examine and analyse their own specific organisational setting and the nature of its leadership at different levels;
- Understand how their own individual self and that of others is shaping their practice of leadership; and
- Begin to think about how they may want to deal with these issues in order to bring their individual and organisational leadership practice, more in harmony with the principles of transformative feminist leadership.

Users may be surprised, or possibly confused, by the fact that many of the exercises given in the toolkit appear to have more to do with organisational processes rather than leadership itself. This is because we believe these organisational processes are essential for transformative feminist leadership. A transformative feminist leader will institute these mechanisms and policies and value statements in order to make the organisation more transparent, accountable and governed by rational, value-based systems and guidelines. In fact, these organisational mechanisms are what prevent leadership from becoming arbitrary, individualistic and authoritarian. They discourage concentration and misuse of power and help staff to challenge those who violate organisational norms. So while they don't appear directly connected, these exercises are actually at the centre of transformative leadership practice.

Who is this Toolkit meant for?

Although this toolkit is essentially designed for feminist organisations engaged in promoting social change, gender equality and women's rights, especially those led and staffed largely by women, it can also be used by others. Indeed, we encourage organisations that have major women-focused programming, or large numbers of women staff, to use the toolkit. We have ourselves used and developed many of these exercises while working with 'mixed' (men and women) as well as male-led organisations in contexts as far apart as Nepal and India in South Asia and Mozambique and Sudan in Africa. Some parts of the toolkit

can also be used by individuals, especially those who play leadership roles or wish to assess or strengthen their leadership capacity (for example, many of the exercises on 'The Self' can be performed by individuals outside of a group process). Overall, however, this toolkit is designed for use by women's organisations with an aspiration to be feminist and practice feminist politics and leadership. For the exercises, it is assumed that there will be a minimum of twenty and a maximum of thirty to thirty-five participants and that these participants are all full-time members of the organisation. The majority of the participants are presumed to be working in programme implementation (though, of course, a small number of those involved in administration could be included as well).

Can you do it yourself?

Apart from organisations, individuals who are in formal leadership positions, or who aspire to play leadership roles (even informally), may also find the exercises and self-awareness techniques useful, especially those in the appendix. These exercises are designed to make the individuals more conscious of their own selves, and to understand how they react to power—their own, as well as that of others. So even if the organisation you work in, is not ready or willing to go through the processes of reflection and change that the toolkit proposes, you may use them yourself to increase your own awareness and practice as a transformative individual within the organisation.

How do you use it?

We have tried to develop the toolkit in a way that enables an individual, group or organisation to use it without an external or dedicated facilitator, since in many contexts, such expertise may not be available, affordable or accessible. However, even in such situations, someone will have to be appointed from within the group to act as a moderator/facilitator for the exercises. Nevertheless, if it is at all feasible, we strongly recommend that you obtain the help of an independent facilitator to get the maximum benefit out of the process. A set of guidelines/instructions for facilitators have been provided in a separate guide at the end of the document.

The toolkit is arranged sequentially to create an analytical and experiential process that will help to get some clarity on the organisational gaps and how they can be addressed. In that sense, this is a diagnostic toolkit. However, we do not insist that the modules be used in the prescribed sequence. Your team or your facilitator may feel that because of certain factors, it is better to begin with Module

2 rather than Module 1, or that the exercises in Module 4 should be woven with those of Module 2. These are decisions better taken after studying the entire toolkit and what it offers and then adapting it to your organisational context.

Even though we offer a diagnostic approach, we obviously cannot provide all the answers and solutions as it is impossible to do so without knowing the specific results of the diagnosis, or the socio-cultural, political, historical context of your organisation or group. But we do believe that the toolkit helps to get a clear diagnosis of how close or how far an organisation is from achieving a transformative feminist leadership, and once the diagnosis has been made, the solutions or at least the pathways to the solutions become evident. Then it is only a matter of deciding to invest time and energy (and possibly, other resources) on implementing the solutions. We are aware of organisations where the processes elaborated in the toolkit have become deeply threatening to people in positions of formal power and authority and they have banned them. Although we cannot offer solutions for all these scenarios in a device as limited as a toolkit, if this does happen, at least you will know—thanks to the toolkit—that there is a leadership problem, or that the leader is the problem! What's more, the leader will know that too, whether they admit it or not.

What the Toolkit cannot do

As you go through the different modules of the toolkit, you will realise that many of the problems or challenges that manifest themselves in the organisational environment, originate from the self. Moreover, they are deeply rooted in historical and personal experiences, often in violent and oppressive structures and injustices that scar people deeply and become internalised. These issues require interventions and healing processes that are beyond the scope of this toolkit. They need longer-term, intensive, and often personalised solutions that no toolkit can possibly address. Therefore, in case the toolkit throws up such concerns, both the individual and the organisation need to identify the most appropriate and accessible solutions, rather than looking for answers within this resource.

How the Toolkit is structured

The toolkit is divided into four modules and comprises of exercises and practices that help understand the facets of the diamond and 'the self'. The final module is not really an independent module in the true sense of the word, but is a sort of a resource to the other three modules. It provides exercises that are designed to help groups as well

as individuals deal with 'the self' component, or other non-cognitive, affect- and emotion-level factors, because often these are the factors that block our positive energy and hinder us from achieving our best. These exercises have been tried and tested in other contexts, and have proved useful in helping people release the energy needed to become truly transformative as leaders/co-workers in a feminist change process.

Finally, please remember that this is not a perfect toolkit, but a pilot, a 'straw man'. It is still in its initial stages—it needs to be used, experimented with, and improved through practice in different contexts. We hope that as it is used and assessed, all of you will contribute to strengthening, expanding, changing and refining it in a way that would be much beyond our individual capacity or imagination. Our goal is to make this a truly 'knowledge commons' tool, crafted, tested, developed, and refined in the most open and participatory way, enriching us all in the process!

SRILATHA BATLIWALA

Scholar Associate
AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development)

Based in: Bangalore, India

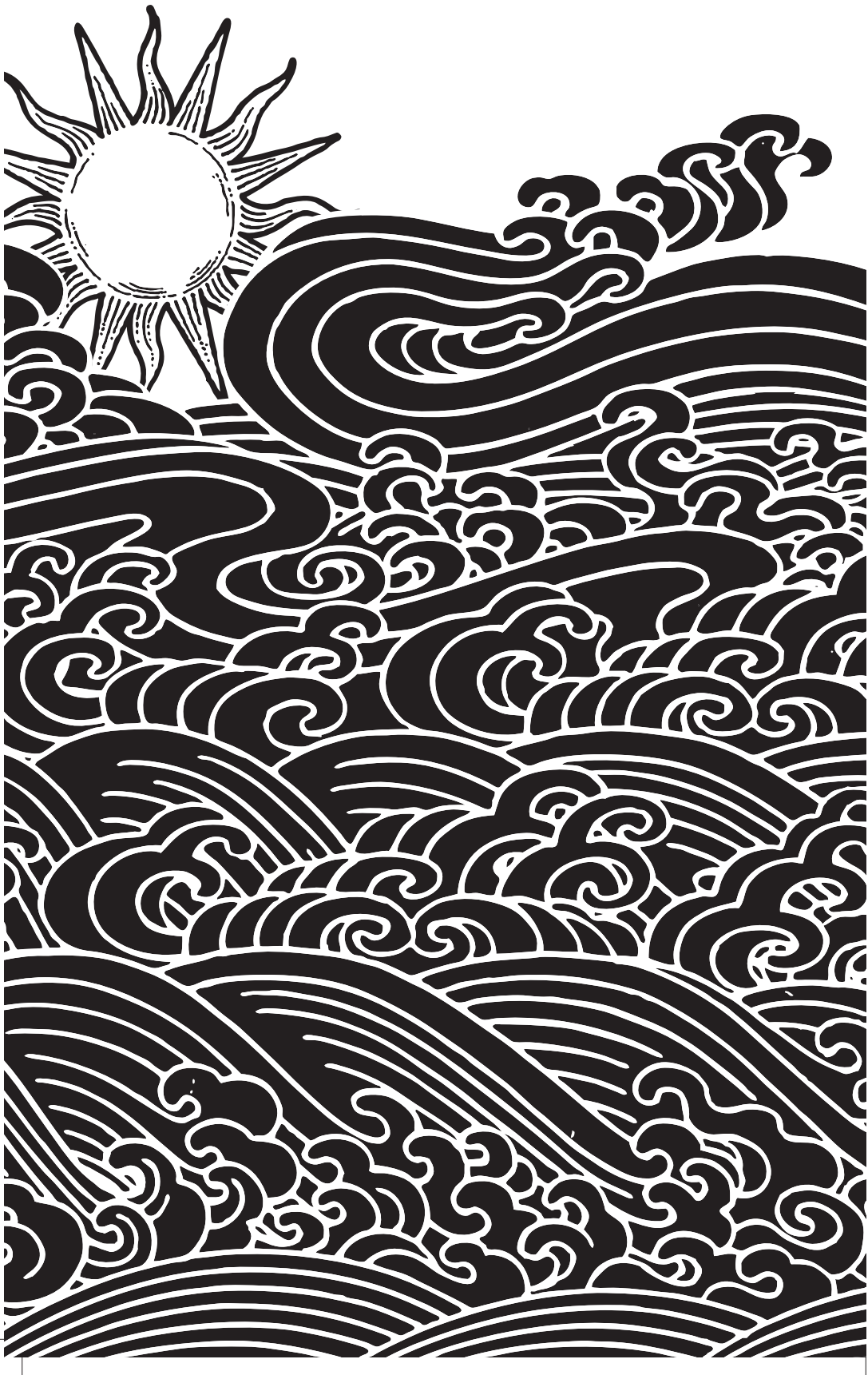
MICHEL FRIEDMAN

Senior Associate
Gender at Work

Based in: Cape Town, South Africa

Using the TFL Toolkit

A Facilitator's Guide



Introduction

The greatest challenge of this toolkit is that it has never been used before; although many of the exercises and processes suggested in it have been used, but usually in a very different context.

This is the first time that this particular collection of exercises and tools have been put together to be applied to the specific goal of unpacking and advancing transformative feminist leadership. Some of the exercises are new and have been developed specifically for this toolkit. They have been tried out only with small groups of women and again, in a very different context. For this reason, to develop a guide for potential facilitators of the toolkit is itself very challenging. We cannot tell you exactly what to watch out for because we are ourselves not sure what kinds of dynamics, situations and challenges might be thrown up when it is applied. What follows, therefore, are some general principles, insights and cautions from our experiences of facilitating complex change and reflection processes with activist groups in different parts of the world. We are sure that after studying the different modules of the toolkit and absorbing their different goals, each of you will have your own distinctive elements to add to the facilitation of these exciting but challenging leadership, learning and organisational change processes.

Creating a Safe, Inclusive, Respectful and Transformatory Space

The creation of safe spaces that enable individual and collective transformation has been discussed in detail in Module 1 (p. 26-44). Here, we will only touch upon some methods that facilitators can use to create such safe spaces.

There are a wide variety of techniques and tools that can be used to help a facilitator to create a greater sense of inclusivity and respectfulness and a space that enables everyone to participate as freely as possible. These are available in, for instance, "Designing and Facilitating Creative Learning Activities" – A companion booklet to "The Barefoot Guide 2: Learning Practices in Organisations and Social Change"[1]. Another resource that is useful in facilitating more democratic spaces is the book "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings that Matter"[2]. CREA has itself also produced some excellent exercises and tips for facilitators in its facilitators manual on Effective Teaching Methods which was developed as part of "It's all one Curriculum". This manual offers guidelines and creative activities for a unified approach to sexuality, gender, HIV and human rights education.

The 'tools'/exercises suggested below have been used by Michel in her work with social change organisations in different parts of Africa and have been found to consistently help create conditions in which all participants feel valued, respected and heard.

---

1 http://www.barefootguide.org/BFG2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12

2 Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings that Matter*, Berrett-Koehler publishers, San Fransisco, 2007.

In Michel's words:

A useful starting point is to reflect on what exercises or practices might better help participants to feel connected to themselves and to each other in their context. As you know, beginning any process by helping to facilitate such connectedness goes a long way towards helping participants feel safer.

These days **I always start a meeting** with 10-20 minutes of adapted Tai Chi exercises (see Appendix, p. 112-119). The visualisation guidance that is given with each physical exercise can be adapted to suit your particular context or situation. You can link the exercises to issues you sense the group is facing or to issues that are very present in their particular country or community. In this way, you can make the visualisation feel more appropriate and can use it to help build a sense of connection for each individual participant as well as for the group as a whole. Because the Tai Chi exercises allow us to focus our minds on both ourselves as well as on the whole—whether the organisation, the community or the movement—it helps us be mindful of the need for a balanced flow of our energies. We need to take care of both, ourselves and the world. As facilitators, we need to simultaneously build/ support an individual sense of 'whole self', each participant's sense of connection to others as well as to the whole group. This does not necessarily happen automatically – but it can be nourished and nurtured.

As a principle, one way of helping participants to feel welcome and safe is to acknowledge their uniqueness and their 'whole' being. This means that **it is important to recognise and work with our capacity to think** (use our heads), **to feel** and value (use our hearts) and **to take action** in the world (literally and metaphorically using our hands and feet). If you only focus on 'content' issues, on ideology or concepts, you ignore how participants feel or act. By creating space for the whole person to be present, you enable them to feel more fully 'themselves', which makes it easier to participate more freely. We have found that many women and people who have been oppressed and discriminated against don't feel valued or recognised for 'themselves'. In order for them to feel comfortable enough to speak what is on their minds, this is a good first step to making them feel welcome.

I have found that it is helpful to ensure you allocate at least some time for personal reflection and sharing throughout the process. One way of accessing feelings, is to create space for **'check-ins'** at the beginning or end of the day, to find out how participants are feeling. You can also set up occasional **partner buzz groups** for participants to notice

how they are feeling and to share this with one other. And you can create space at different points in your process to allow **freewriting or journaling**, which is also a tool for self-reflection (see p. 31-37 in Appendix). At different moments in a process, it is also possible to stop for a few minutes and do some conscious breathing with everyone (see Appendix for some possibilities). Again, this enables participants to come back to themselves, to notice what is going on in their own 'body-mind' and can also help them to take responsibility for how they are communicating what they are feeling towards others. Sometimes, we react from an unconscious place, which can be very hurtful to others and simply becoming conscious of what is going on inside of us can make a difference.

Jointly setting 'agreements' by which the group wishes to engage—or 'rules of engagement' as they are sometimes called—is an important step that brings conscious awareness to everyone that they are creating a 'learning community', that wishes to abide by a certain type of conduct. It is also very important for a facilitator to be on her/his toes and constantly observe how participants are treating each other and to look out for 'abusive' or inappropriate behaviour that needs to be dealt with. Here are some methods I have used to intervene in such situations:

- Ask the person who has been 'abused' how they are feeling and if there is a different way in which the person doing the abusing, can communicate their message so that the 'abused' can hear it differently.
- Ask participants to reflect on how they are participating in the group, what is helping them or hindering them.
- Create other ways to get this feedback so you can act on it.
- If the energy in the whole group is being impacted by the negative behaviour of one individual, if there are two facilitators, one facilitator can ask that individual to go outside with them and you can help them debrief what is going on for them. You can introduce the person to the concept of 'power under' and to the Karpman drama triangle and assist them to reflect on what previous experience in their life is being triggered by the current interchange. If one person in particular is triggering the person expressing negative behaviour, you can suggest they do the Exercises for Developing Self Awareness, in Appendix.
- Stop the whole meeting and get everyone to use the Emotional Freedom Technique (see Appendix, p. 107-111) so that some of the highly charged feelings can be dissipated before you attempt

to process what is going on underneath the surface. It is always crucial, if one person has been 'attacked' in any way, that they have a chance to 'come back,' to respond. It is always useful to distinguish between the content of what people are saying and HOW they are saying it. It is in the tone, the attitude, the intentionality—the HOW—that most powerfully impacts whether or not the recipient feels attacked or challenged. It is the facilitator's role to help participants communicate clearly and directly and to differentiate when the communication is overtly emotive or overtly intellectual and whether an emotional communication is being disguised as an intellectual one.

- When you need to give feedback that is critical, it is important to do this in a 'kind' way as opposed to a criticising or undermining way. Given that the tone and the attitude with which you give feedback is almost more important than the content, because of how it makes the person on the receiving end feel, it helps to look at the person you're talking to with 'kind eyes' when giving such feedback. This practice of using 'kind eyes' is important to encourage in the participants as well, but it is usually the facilitator that needs to take responsibility for setting the tone.
- Another useful tip is to recommend that whenever someone wants to give advice or 'tell' someone else what to do, to rather turn the advice into a useful question for the person to think about and figure out their own answer.

Participants introducing themselves to one another

The first opportune moment to create feelings of inclusion in a group is the way you start the meeting—how you get participants to introduce themselves to each other can help to set a tone.

Often, we begin by asking people to introduce themselves simply by saying their name and their function – but this does not help to build warm relationality. It helps to add in one or two other questions that help build relationships that get beyond an instrumental fact sharing. Questions that are perhaps more personal or focus on feelings or that are affirmative. Questions which, in a way, either acknowledge or challenge internalised oppression and which also 'practicalise' 'head', 'heart', 'hands'. Again, you would choose something that is appropriate to your context and the situation you are dealing with.

For example,

Today I'm feeling...

Today what is most on my mind is....

One thing I like about myself/organisation/country/community is...

One thing that makes me feel happy to be alive is...

One thing I really love about my body is...

What is stopping me from being fully present here today is...

All these seemingly 'small' interventions can contribute to how participants can feel in a learning space. Another wonderful introduction exercise you can use in a group of between 10 and 30 people is called Milling and is adapted from Joanna Macy[3].

I've used this exercise to:

- Help build a more qualitative relationship between individual participants
- Create a deeper sense of personal connection between participants, even between those who have met each other before and think they know each other well
- Help integrate new people in a heartfelt way into a pre-existing group
- Initiate a meeting between two organisations that were in conflict and needed to learn to 'see' each other in a new way, as 'people' and not as 'enemies' or 'opponents'
- To help participants find something they appreciate or value in a difficult situation
- To create space/opportunity to reflect on challenging norms
- Help participants learn about and reflect on what it is like to simply listen to another person without interrupting and to be heard without being interrupted.

Instructions

Basically, participants move around the room finding different people to talk to. They do this about ten times with different people. With each pair, one person gets to talk for one minute on a subject the facilitator gives, then the second one talks. Only listening, no interrupting. (It has helped to teach people how much they don't listen actually!!!). After the pair is complete, they move on to find a new partner.

The topics start with ones that are appreciative, (could be of oneself, the organisation, the group one is with, whatever is relevant to the

3 Joanna Macy, Molly Young Brown. Coming Back To Life. Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World. New Society Publishers. Canada. The Milling exercise is on page 94.

theme or topic one is dealing with)

Then you move onto what you have to leave behind you, to be fully present today;

Then at some point, no talking with the voice, only 'talking with the eyes';

Then topics move onto challenges or learnings and end with hopes for the meeting.

Introductions and get to know each other better

Tell participants to walk around the room. At some point stop them and tell them to find a partner to talk to. Preferably someone they don't already know or someone that has caught their eye. Instruct them to take it in turns to talk without interruption. Listener only listens. Don't try too hard to get someone you want to be with. Think of it as throwing dice and you get who you get. Mix with people from other organisation/ you don't know as much as possible. You give them the topic to be discussed and time for about 60-90 seconds. Then stop the conversation and give the second person a chance to talk for 60-90 seconds.

Do this for about 10 rounds.

You can make up the possible questions you can use, according to the situation you are dealing with. I give two examples below:

The first set of questions I used to start the day when facilitating between two organisations which were in a conflict situation with each other.

Say your Name...

1. *What I appreciate about myself is*
2. *What I appreciate about my own organisation*
3. *What I appreciate about other organisation*
4. *What I need to leave behind me to fully participate today*
5. *Both partners look at each other without speaking, i.e. don't speak with your voice, only tell your story with your eyes. In the process, acknowledge life's gifts, both of your commitment to being here, each other's humanity. (This exercise is only done once, as both partners will be doing it at the same time. From the next question you start talking again and swapping partners like before).*
6. *What I find challenging about the relationship between our two organisations*

7. *What I have learned about myself from this challenging relationship*
8. *What I have learned about my organisation from this challenging relationship*
9. *What I have learned about the other organisation from this challenging relationship*
10. *Share your hopes for the day/meeting/process; first meet in 2's, then 4's, 8's, until you have two groups.*

The second example is the questions I used for a group of participants attending a three day 'Gender at Work' writing process. Most of them had previously participated in a longer term 'Gender at Work' action learning process and had not seen each other for at least a year.

1. *Something I appreciate about myself since participating in the G@W change project*
2. *Something I appreciate about my creativity*
3. *Something I appreciate about writing*
4. *Something I appreciate about being able to participate in this writing workshop*
5. *What I need to leave behind me to fully participate in this workshop*
6. *Tell your stories with only your eyes,*
7. *What feels challenging to me about writing*
8. *What I have learned about my relationship to writing during the G@W process*
9. *What I have learned about my ability to express myself and my voice during the G@W process*
10. *Hopes / expectations for this meeting— why you want to strengthen your writing, concerns*
11. *Meet in groups of 4 and then 8 and summarise these for plenary*

Afterwards, you can debrief on how it felt to do the exercise. You can also access the hopes the group is bringing to the meeting and can get one person from each of the remaining two groups to summarise the hopes from their group.

> ***A woman farmworker said after participating in this exercise:*** *"Looking in the eyes was difficult, I realised that there is a lot of power. Supervisors on the farm do that and I realised I need to look back in their eyes. If I look them in the eyes, I could show them that I am serious when I speak"*

Storytelling

Creating opportunities for participants to narrate stories about specific topics or experiences that they can then reflect upon and draw patterns or lessons from, enables them to feel validated and listened to. Moreover, it is helpful to have a space for individuals to share their own stories and not always do everything in groups. It is in finding the balance between the individual and the group that the art of how to facilitate in ways that help each person feel fully able to be present, lies.

Mind-Body Exercises

If you are facilitating a group but don't feel comfortable using the mind-body exercises, you can ask the group for a volunteer who is experienced in and likes these kinds of exercises, to take leadership of these exercises. It helps to not make the exercises compulsory but rather to invite people to participate and also to give space to those who wish to not participate. Often those who opt to stay out see how their colleagues benefit, get curious and then after some time wish to try the exercises themselves.

Module 1

Most of the tips and ideas given above apply largely to the exercises in Module 1 and Appendix. Module 1 is essentially dedicated to building a greater awareness and understanding of the Self and of how our histories and experiences have shaped the way we practice leadership or react to the leadership of others. Therefore, almost all the suggestions offered above will be useful in setting up the environment for Module 1. In particular, we would advise focusing on:

- The exercises for self-awareness (Appendix, Section 6)
- Mind-body work to get people out of the 'head' space and more into feelings and body sensations
- Action plans for working on the SELF at both individual and organisational levels

Module 2

This is a fairly straightforward module, largely focused on the organisation, hence it should not present too many problems. However, the act of identifying gaps in current and desired vision and mission of the organisation may release some negative emotions and energies, so facilitators need to be prepared to handle these. They may use the exercises provided in Appendix to process and resolve them.

Exercise 1, on building the 'big picture' or vision for the organisation may generate some conflicting ideas or a deadlock on some key elements of the vision. These need to be handled through interventions on deep listening, going to the feeling level to understand where the tensions are coming from and consensus-building techniques.

Exercises 2 and 3 may bring up some defensive reactions from those in formal leadership positions, who may either feel their prior articulations of the organisation's mission are being challenged or found wanting or that the collective force field analysis has gone beyond the organisation's capacity to respond, but that there is an expectation that it should. If negative or defensive behaviours ensue, the facilitator may have to handle them with any of the techniques described in Appendix or their own tried and tested methods.

Module 3

We anticipate some repeated confusion around values and principles, so the facilitator/s need to be very comfortable and clear about the distinction in their own minds. We sense that repeated clarifications may be necessary, but beyond a point, it is more useful to focus on the goals of the exercise rather than semantics. The idea is to clearly articulate the ideals of the organisation, in terms of what they wish to practice internally and see realised in the communities they work with or the world at large.

We also anticipate some embedded antipathy or discomfort with the notion of feminism itself and some surfacing of popular misconceptions and stereotypes about the negative attributes of feminism and feminists. Again, it is important for facilitators to themselves feel comfortable and clear about feminism. If this is not the case, it may be useful to seek this clarity before facilitating an organisation to use this toolkit. You may like to read, for instance, the section on "What is Feminism?" in AWID's "Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements" (Second Edition), available at: http://www.awid.org/Library/Changing-their-World-Concepts-and-practices-of-women-s-movements-2nd-Edition. This gives a clear picture of what feminism is in today's context, as well as the section on feminist principles in the module itself.

Exercise 2 in this module is also likely to throw up a lot of tension and negative emotions, especially in organisations where the atmosphere is far from ideal, where people DON'T LIKE TO WORK!

Facilitators will have to ensure that this module does not end up as a blame game, with participants exchanging accusations and

recriminations. The tendency towards 'perfectionism' is particularly common in women's organisations and results in a refusal to look clearly at what is imperfect, causing much unnecessary trauma/ conflict. It is, therefore, very important for the facilitators to give participants (and formal leaders) 'permission' to accept imperfection, while working towards the ideal.

This exercise may also throw up specific challenges in the context of large and "mixed" organisations. Michel shared an example of how in her work with unions in South Africa, she found that some of the feminists in the union got caught up in the bureaucratic machinations, despite their best efforts. So there is an additional challenge for facilitators in working on principles and values in large organisations, as well as old organisations where the 'deep culture' may have become so strong that even questioning the operational values is difficult for its members.

Again, we can only suggest that you focus on building a safe space where the group looks constructively at what needs to be changed rather than dwelling on what's wrong or what cannot be fixed. Individual leaders—especially those in formal positions of authority—may have to be supported in one-on-one sessions before and after the exercise to ensure that they don't become defensive or shut down the session altogether, if they feel attacked.

Module 4

Both personal histories with power and the exercises on Deep Culture usually bring up strong emotions. Keep an eye out for any dynamics that might be negatively impacting the process. Wherever necessary, you can stop the session and go to an exercise from Appendix. Get the participants to do one of the breathing exercises, the Emotional Freedom Technique, roaring like a lion or fingerholds. In a particularly tense situation, it may sometimes help to just stop the process and give the participants two to three minutes to simply freewrite (writing for themselves without any kind of self-censorship) on how they are feeling, to help them get in touch with themselves and shift a difficult dynamic.

Be particularly mindful of how deep culture maps are done and emphasise the idea of 'kind eyes' and 'deep listening'. Participants must be careful about the tone in which insights are shared. It would be wise to give this 'warning' or guideline as a reminder before the small groups go off to do the maps. Also, remind people that they may feel defensive or want to point fingers or criticise others, but the point

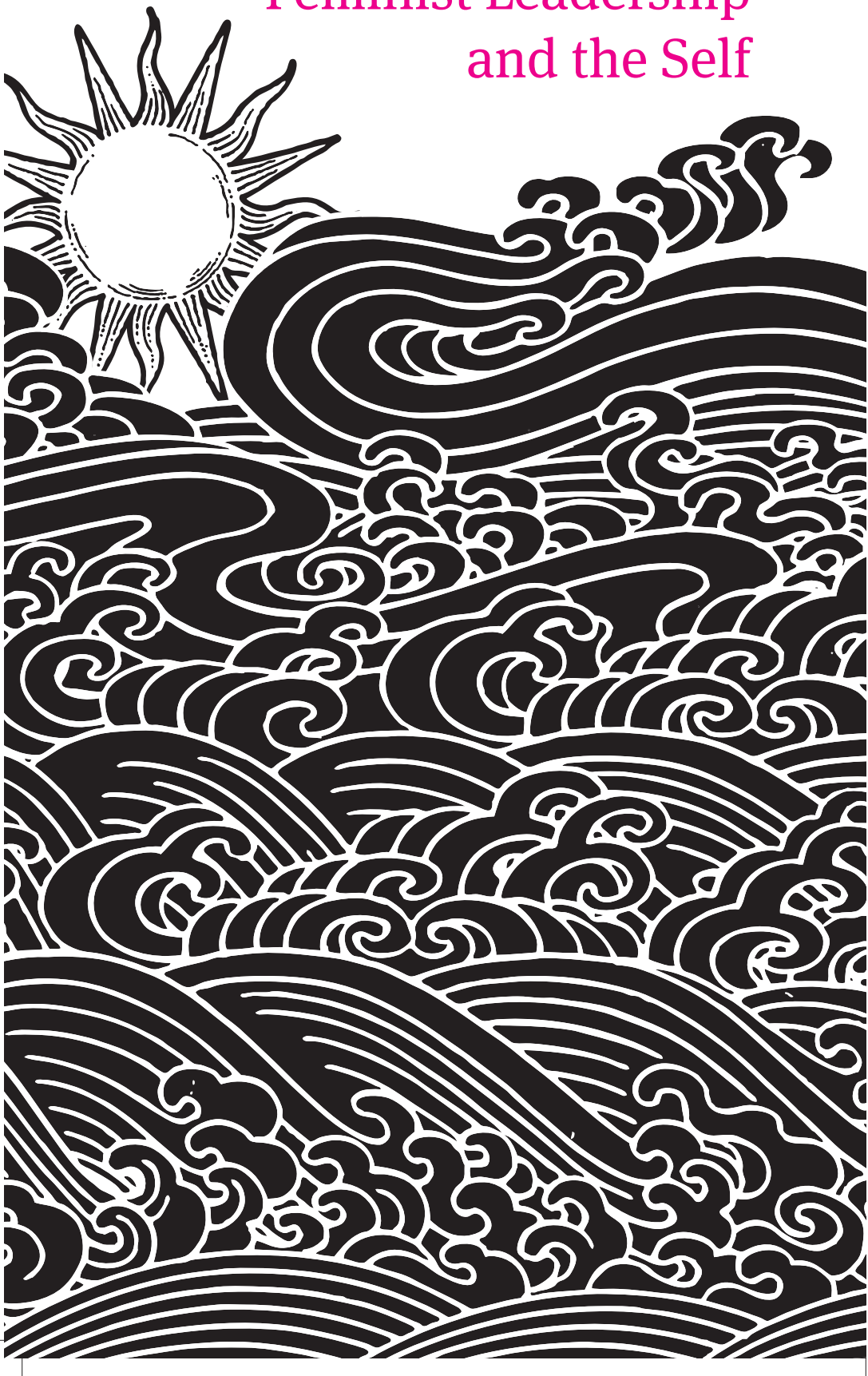
of the exercise is to put up a mirror so we can see ourselves differently and this takes considerable maturity. The idea is to be challenging, but in a 'kind' way.

One technique that has worked well for some of us is to universalise some elements of the critique of the deep culture that emerges. For example, stress on the point that many of the negative elements and processes in their deep culture are not unique or particular to their organisation but that most organisations struggle with them; or that most feminist organisations struggle with certain kinds of deep culture. This helps focus it on a 'real' sharing rather than on accusing or blaming, thereby reducing the tension and the sense of failure that can emerge. Emphasise that ignoring these problems is not the solution, even though the proposed solutions may seem excessively painful or difficult. Follow the time lags suggested between different parts of the exercise for they are intended to help reduce and resolve some of the negativity that could sabotage the entire purpose of the exercise.

There is no question that handling the deep culture exercises and helping the group move towards a constructive set of solutions requires immensely skilled facilitation by an objective but caring outsider and although the process is challenging and difficult, it is worth it.

MODULE 1

Transformative Feminist Leadership and the Self



We begin this document by attempting to define and clarify the core concept that lies at the heart of this toolkit—Transformative Feminist Leadership (TFL) and the ideas at its centre—feminism and feminist leadership and what is involved in transformation. We think it is important not only to understand TFL but also why it matters. What is the difference between TFL and any other kind of leadership? Also, since we are talking about feminist leadership, what is feminism today and what does it stand for?

FEMINISM			
Ideology	Social change strategy	Analytical framework	Daily practices

What is Feminism?

Since feminism is a central concept in the notion of transformative feminist leadership, let us begin by defining and understanding what feminism means. Feminism today must be understood a little differently from the past, when it was mainly considered an ideology that proposed equality between men and women. Given its evolution over the past fifty years, we prefer to define feminism as "***an ideology, an analytical framework and a strategic framework***."[1] This means that the ideology of equality that is so central to feminism, has led to the creation of a framework for analysing power in society. It has also led to the development of social change strategies that consider the transformation of power relations, especially gender power relations, at the heart of all social change processes. Let us examine the various

1. This entire section is drawn from the Second Edition of the AWID document "Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements", by Srilatha Batliwala, August 2011, available at: http://www.awid.org/Library/Changing-their-World-Concepts-and-practices-of-women-s-movements-2nd-Edition

components of the definition of feminism:

- **As an ideology**, feminism today stands not only for gender equality but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalise any set of people on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, ability, class, caste or ethnicity. It also recognises the intersecting nature of people's identities and social locations and the fact that we experience discrimination, exclusion or oppression in intersecting and simultaneous ways. Hence, feminism no longer seeks simplistic parity between the sexes but a more profound transformation that accepts multiple gender identities and creates gender equality in an entirely new social order. In this new order, people live individually and collectively in societies that are based on social and economic equality with all their human rights, free from discrimination, violence, conflict and militarisation and in harmony with the natural world. Most importantly, feminism has always linked the personal and the political. Issues that were once considered 'private' such as sexuality, gendered division of labour in the home and workplace, domestic violence or abusive relationships are actually political and the responsibility for their transformation lies with the society at large and not with the individual. Feminism has also stressed the importance of applying and practicing these beliefs and values in one's own life and of trying to live the change that we seek in the world at large.
- **As an analytical framework**, feminism has transformed the concepts of patriarchy (the social order of male rights and privileges) and gender (socially constructed relations of power between men and women and other gender identities). It has created a range of analytical tools and methods for unpacking the power imbalances between men and women in various social institutions and structures (e.g. gendered division of labour in the household and economic activities, control of women's sexuality and reproductive life, etc.). Feminist scholars have also developed radically new frameworks to analyse the way in which multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion operate together, rather than incrementally, in people's lives (e.g., concepts such as intersectionality[2] and social exclusion). Feminism is embracing new notions of gender and gender identities that go beyond the social construction of just two genders, thanks to the work of queer

2 Kimberlie Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color", Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, pp. 1241 - 1299, July 1991.

scholars and activists and the emerging field of LGBT studies[3].

- **As a social change strategy**, feminism prioritises the empowerment of women and other marginalised genders, the transformation of gender power relations and the advancement of gender equality within all change interventions. Feminism believes that change that does not advance the status and rights of women is not real change at all. For instance, economic interventions that increase household incomes without giving women greater share of that income or alter the gender division of labour in the generation of that income; or improvements in health care that do not address the specific barriers that may prevent women from accessing such care, are not considered as feminist strategies. Thus, feminism views all change interventions through a 'gender lens', i.e. whether gender equality and women's rights are being consciously addressed and advanced by the change process.
- **In daily life,** feminist practice is concerned with the daily practice of power, with special attention on how we use our power and how we respond to other people's use of their power in everyday life and relationship interactions. This is true in our own personal relationships and in the organisation and movement cultures we are part of creating. We recognise that it is not enough to critique others' abuses of power but that we must be committed to working towards creating relationships and organisation cultures that are inclusive and do not reproduce what we are challenging in the world outside. We also recognise that in order to change the historical devaluing of people who have been marginalised due to oppressive or exploitative social relations in many cultures of the world—people, for instance, who are disabled or have different sexual orientation or belong to particular ethnic groups or are discriminated or stigmatised because of their occupations—we need to get beyond the male-female binary of traditional feminist beliefs or thinking. We also need to work towards ensuring that the many different women (and men) we work with/relate to in everyday life actually 'feel' included, valued and recognised and not abused and are able to respond to us in an open rather than defensive or closed manner. In other words, we need to pay as much attention to the world we are creating in our everyday lives as the world we are critiquing.

---

3 Such as the work of Judith Butler, 1990, "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity", London, Routledge; and 2004, "Undoing Gender", London, Routledge; and of Carole S. Vance, " Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality" from A. van Kooten Nierkerk and T. Van Der Meer (eds.), Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality? (Amsterdam: An Dekker, 1989) pp. 13-34.

What is *Transformative* Feminist Leadership?

In the feminist leadership concept paper, transformative feminist leadership is defined as:

> *"Women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others – especially other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all."*

What makes feminist leadership different from other kinds of leadership is well explained by feminist scholar Tracy Barton, who states:

> *"Leadership from a feminist standpoint is informed by the power of the feminist lens, which enables the feminist leader to identify injustices and oppressions and inspires her to facilitate the development of more inclusive, holistic ... communities. Feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice and equity and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and ability at the forefront.... The elements particular to ... feminist leadership ... include a focus on both individual or micro-level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalised voices to the centre of the conversation and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda."* [4]

Finally, the Admira Toolkit completes our definitions by bringing in the importance of 'psychic structures' and the self:

> *"Feminist leadership [is] oriented to a different arrangement of the human order: re-distribution of power and re-distribution of responsibilities. [It is about] fighting societal inequalities. Changing economic and social structures, beginning with transformation of psychic structures.... [we] define feminist leadership as leadership congruent with feminist principles."* [5]

4 Tracy Barton, "Feminist Leadership: Building Nurturing Academic Communities", in *Advancing Women's Leadership* Online Journal, Vol.21, Fall 2006.

5 Admira, (no date), Section 8, Management & Leadership: Feminist Leadership, available at http://www.zenska-mreza.hr/prirucnik/en/en_read_management_leadership_8.htm

All these definitions emphasise that TFL embodies the four dimensions of feminism: ideology, analysis, social change and daily practices. It comprises guiding processes that seek very fundamental changes in the distribution of power and privilege in society, especially power and privilege that stems from one's gender identity. It recognises the different *faces* of power—visible, hidden and invisible, external and internal *sources* of power, as well as the various *expressions* of power (see concept paper, p. 33-40). Using feminist tools, these changes in power and privilege are identified in order to help us analyse and challenge the nature of patriarchal and other power relations and structures, institutions and norms that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion in a given context. This analysis stems from an ideology that recognises how women themselves (including social change leaders!) have internalised the oppression and norms of society, that reside within them and that this internalised oppression often manifests itself in the use of what Steven Wineman calls 'power under' (practices of victim power that indirectly subvert and sabotage formal processes and structures)[6].

So TFL is not only about what you do with or for others but also what you change within yourself in order to mirror and model the change that you seek in the world outside. TFL goes beyond analysis and strategy to everyday practices and because of this 'everyday' nature, we need to address our ways of thinking, feeling and bodily sensations. This implies a high level of awareness of the self, of what is going on within us and not just what is going on in the organisation or with people outside. The following section on the personal and the political will explain this in more detail.

Finally, as the concept paper outlines, leadership is not performed solely by the individual in a formal position of authority in an organisation, i.e. the director or manager, but by each of us, wherever we may be located in an organisation or movement. TFL recognises the leadership capacity of every person in a change process because leadership is about committing to and taking responsibility for that larger change and contributing to it each in our own way, irrespective of our role, position, power or status in the organisation.

---

6 Wineman, Steven, 2003: Power-Under. Trauma and Nonviolent Social Change. Available at no cost www.TraumaAndNonviolence.com.

The Personal is Political – Transformational Feminist Leadership and the Self[7]

In this leadership concept, the importance and influence of the self is elaborated upon. The four "Ps" of leadership are mediated by the self, as shown in Figure 1.1 below, so it is impossible to imagine a transformational feminist leadership that does not address the self on a number of levels.

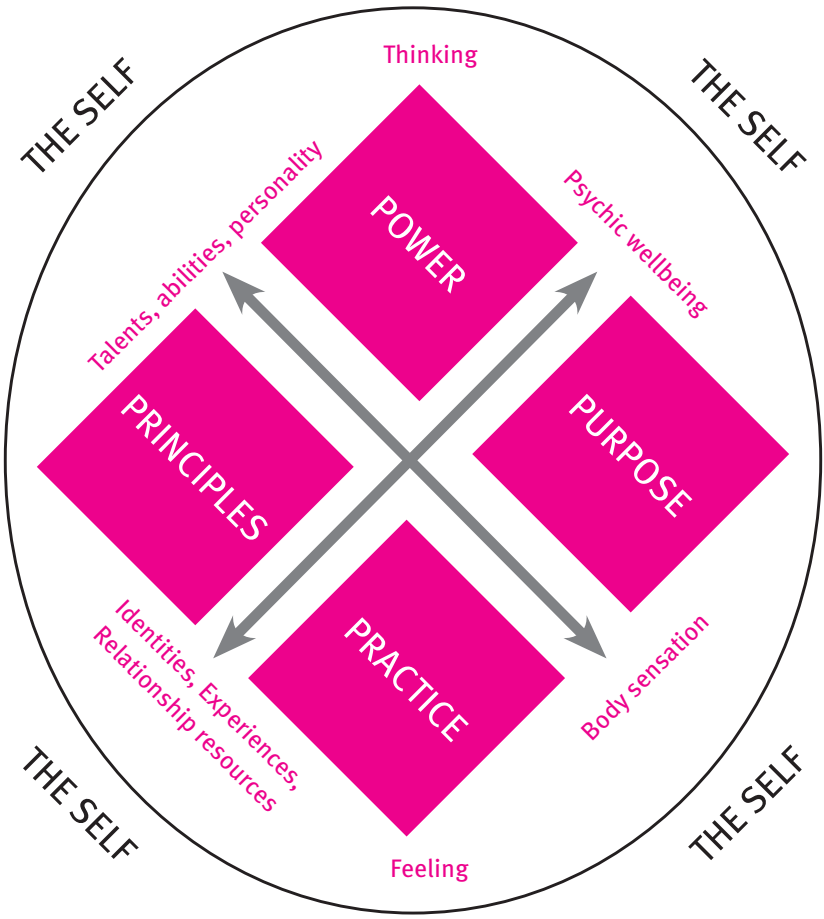


Figure 1.1. Four "Ps" of leadership.

But what, in fact, is 'the self'? How do we understand it? In the simplest terms, the self can be defined as being made up of thinking, feeling and body sensations. The manner in which these come together are unique for each individual. Any transformational work needs to address all three of these levels. The way that the self engages with and is in turn changed by its relationship with the world is complex. Our history, experience, social, economic and other identities, talents,

7 We'd like to thank Louise Mina, feminist psychologist for her assistance with this section.

abilities, personality traits, psychic well-being, personal social capital (contacts, networks and support) are some of the many parts that we bring to bear on the world we engage with. At the same time, these parts are influenced by and constructed in the world we live in, stratified as it is by the contradictory power relationships of family, gender, race, class and cultural divisions. We constantly move between different positions of power, creating a sense of self within this fluid matrix. We also understand that collectives, organisations, movements, society are made up of individuals and any truly transformative change has to transform both the individual and the system (i.e. the collective).

The most helpful way of understanding the self is to see it as neither fixed nor static. Even when we are holding rigidly onto a belief or feeling trapped in an emotion, it is useful to see it as 'the ice' above the flow of water. Because the self within us is actually very fluid, not rigid – its nature is to pull us forward, towards change, rather than maintain a static state of being. And it is this force within the self, this fluid movement towards change that is a powerful source of our agency, our capacity to act for change. A focus on changing the self, thus, provides a solid building block for a change in the broader society. As feminist leaders deeply concerned with the transformation of power inequalities, we understand that we have to engage in transformational work within ourselves, as we are instruments of power in our own organisations and movements.

This transformational work enables us to model a different way of engaging with existing power relations within our own collectives/organisations. As feminist leaders occupying formal positions of power[8], it is important that we do so consciously. To lead differently, we need to not only understand ourselves in new ways but also to *feel* and more significantly, to *act* differently; our daily practices of power need to be more expansive, to be able to embrace diversity and to be open to a new kind of listening. If we do not do this, instead of expanding into new forms, we may slip into old top-down forms of leadership and control. Therefore, our daily practices of power help shape the culture and deep structure of our organisations and movements[9].

Another reason for us to focus on the self is that many women and feminist organisations are often involved in what can be called

---

8 Such positions could include coordinators, directors, CEO's, as well as programme leaders, managers or field facilitators. Any position that gives us access to structural power because of the position we are in relative to other people we are engaging with.

9 See the Justice and Women case study in the Gender at Work publication, "Transforming Power" (2012) for an illustration of this in practice.

'front-line' work. Our organisations are often engaged in situations that are violent or abusive. These situations can make us or the people we work with feel angry, powerless or hopeless. Those working specifically with any form of gender-based violence may also be dealing with survivors of some kind of trauma—physical or emotional. Moreover, simply living in a world determined by hierarchical, discriminatory and exclusionary practices may generate deep-seated feelings of rage and a desire to seek revenge or to control others. Often, our reactions may be unconscious and we may find ourselves behaving in ways we sometimes wish we didn't. The contexts and environments of our work—the constant struggle for funding, turnover of staff, hostility from various sides to what we are trying to do, an oppressive political climate, etc.—can also be extremely stressful and can lead to bad tempers, burn-out, fatigue or illnesses. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to be a role model for the kind of behaviour that will transform our dream of living in a world that is less violent, more respectful, more inclusive and less authoritarian, into a reality. Is there another way? Can leaders themselves learn to be less reactive and create organisational cultures that can support a greater sense of well-being among staff and constituencies? How do we develop an approach that can model the very values and practices of communicating and engaging that we wish to see in our relationships in broader societies?

In the feminist leadership concept paper, the different realms and expressions of power have been discussed in detail, including 'power under'. The links between these expressions of power and our experiences as women have also been drawn out. Similarly, in the Appendix, we have provided exercises that can help us achieve a greater degree of self-awareness. One of these,' I'm Okay, You're Okay' – Figure 1.2, below– talks about the role of our fundamental psychological positions in how we relate to power and to other people in various settings of our lives—our family, our work space, our other relationship circles. Given how common it is for us as women to occupy the 'I'm not ok' position, it is worth investigating how this position plays out in power relationships in organisations.

1. I'm ok you're not ok	2. I'm not ok, you're ok
3. I'm not ok, you're not ok	4. I'm ok, you're ok

Figure 1.2.

Every time we occupy a 'not ok' space inside ourselves, we generate feelings of anger, fear, guilt, blame, shame and inadequacy and we become defensive. These feelings profoundly affect the way we relate to others, making us behave in a dysfunctional way. Stephen Karpman, a psychiatrist and a teacher of Transactional Analysis outlined the 'drama triangle' (Figure 1.3, below) as a way of describing the effect of 'victim' feelings on interrelationships. Karpman talks about three roles in the drama triangle—Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim. According to Karpman, no matter where we start in the triangle, we end up in the 'Victim' corner. Generally, there are two people in this triangle and as they interact with each other, they move between the different roles, trading different sets of victim feelings. Each one of us has a primary or familiar role that gets us into the triangle. This may be connected to themes from our childhood (such as roles we were asked to fulfil in our family or responses to personal or systemic abuse). Once inside the triangle, we move through all the positions and can do this very swiftly several times a day.

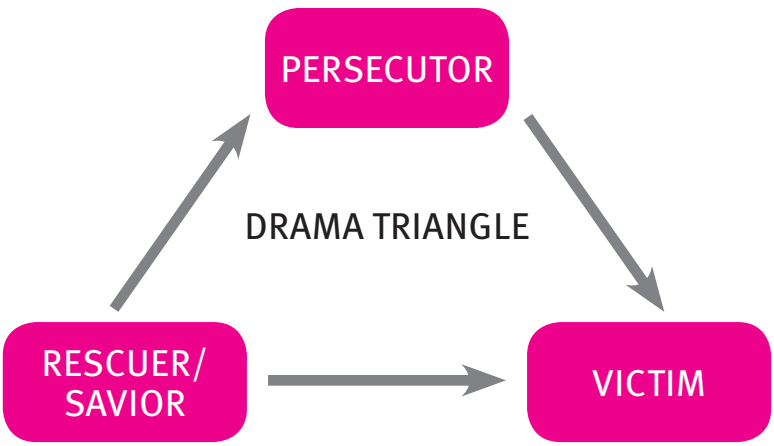


Fig.1.3: Drama Triangle by Stephan Karpman

The Persecutor and Rescuer positions are both one-up, 'I'm ok – you're not ok' positions. The Victim position is at the bottom of the triangle and carries the 'I'm not ok' feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy. Karpman describes how we move between positions, giving us a means of tracking abusive and damaging power relationships not just within ourselves (we can go around this triangle within ourselves), but also within organisations, as leaders or facilitators, or as field workers in relationships with clients or constituency members.

When anything goes wrong in our relationships, we can often see this triangle at work. For example, you may start by feeling like a victim to a persecutor—someone does or says something that makes you feel inadequate and undervalued. If you then put this person down to

prove them wrong, you have now moved into the persecutor's role and the person who persecuted you, is now the victim. If you try and fix a situation in the organisation by bending over backwards, pretending nothing is wrong and coming up with one solution after another, you are in the rescuer/fix-it role. When your solutions are ignored and you are feeling exhausted, you are likely to move into the victim role or you may get angry and resentful and move into the persecutor role. And so it goes! Think of any difficult relationships you have in your organisation as leaders, facilitators or as field workers. Are you in the victim role, the persecutor role, or are you the fix-it/saviour/rescuer, coming up with solutions that never resolve the underlying difficulty?

Karpman saw the best way of getting out of this triangle using what he called adult-adult thinking which accompanies the 'I'm ok-You're ok' position. You will see several examples of adult-adult thinking in the following section on "Creating learning spaces that are respectful, inclusive and transformatory".

The deeply democratic perspective that Gadamer[10] writes about, works to counteract the position that sees others as helpless and without agency and thereby, discourages the 'I'm ok-You're not ok' thinking that goes with rescuing. When we encourage a space that is not authoritarian but in fact full of movement, possibility and fluidity, we work against the thinking that allows and perpetuates the persecutor position and that leads to domination and control. The deep dialogue we encourage people to enter into with their whole being, creates a level of self-understanding and a sense of empowerment and is directly opposite to the 'I'm not ok-You're ok' thinking that cultivates feelings of victimhood. As Gadamer states, "The task of bringing people to a self-understanding of themselves may help us to gain our freedom in relation to everything that has taken us in unquestioningly" (p. 101).

Therefore, focusing on practices by which we can support ourselves in the face of the feelings outlined in the drama triangle can make a big difference in how we experience and engage in our work and how we create a new approach to the world. It is also important that we take care of ourselves as we do this difficult work. Many women activists are so focused on what they can do for others that they often tend to neglect themselves, thinking that it is selfish or less important. The paradox however, is that we can take better care of others when we

10 Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ch 6 "Undergoing The Situation With The Other" from Donna Orange, Thinking for Clinicians: Philosophical Resources for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic Psychotherapies (New York: Routledge, 2010): 99-118.

take care of ourselves too[11].

Given our concerns vis à vis transformation at all three levels of self—thinking, feeling and body sensations—this Module also offers a focus on the creation of a safe space and deep listening; Capacitar body-mind-spirit practices[12] and ways of understanding and working with power[13].

Capacitar practices[14] is a tool that can help us both take proper care of ourselves as well as challenge and deal with the negative feelings caused by social oppression and subordination that can paralyse us and hence our work. Based on ancient traditions and bodywork, these body-mind practices help to release and reprogramme emotional energies that are blocking us in various ways. Unfortunately, many of us in the social change and feminist worlds are uncomfortable with such techniques and associate them with blind beliefs or superstition. The good news is that today, we can approach these practices with our rationalism quite intact. Because what thousands of years of mind-body practices have demonstrated to its practitioners in terms of healing or 'making whole,' is finally being backed by current research in the field of Neuroscience. See for instance, the information on the Limbic brain in the box below.

11 Jane Barry and Jelena Dordevic (2009) discuss this phenomenon and the consequent burn-out that is so common in the culture of women's movements.

12 Detailed instructions for each practice can be found in the Appendix.

13 Further developed in module 4.

14 The explanation in the following paragraphs comes from Friedman, (2010).

The Limbic Brain and Social Change

Servan-Schreiber (2004), a psychiatrist, pioneering research into body-mind connections, explains how the human brain is composed of a cognitive brain (the neocortex) responsible for language and abstract thinking and a limbic or emotional brain responsible for emotions and the instinctual control of behaviour. He points out that the emotional brain controls much of the body's physiology, autonomic responses and psychological wellbeing. The limbic brain literally forms or gets "mapped," through our emotional experiences, creating physical neural pathways that can become deep grooves the more times we repeat that experience. This phenomenon is responsible for our habitual thoughts and feelings – every time we repeat an emotional experience, we solidify its pathway. The emotional information resides in our cells, where it can be activated without words. For this reason, "it is often easier to access emotions through the body than through language" (34).

The limbic brain is important to work on social change because of the emotional consequences resulting both from social oppression and from change interventions. Various kinds of social oppression, subordination and exclusionary practices might be justified through ideological or rational means, yet their effects are experienced emotionally. Feelings of inferiority, isolation, cynicism or anger are typical examples. Change processes that challenge what is familiar, often precipitate feelings of fear and anxiety. Moreover, there is an increasing body of research demonstrating the links between unhealed trauma and social violence. Because our behaviour, actions, reactions during traumatic experiences are mostly autonomic and instinctual rather than calculated and conscious, trauma will inevitably express itself in the body and can't be easily addressed using logical or rational methods (Berceli, 2008). Traumatologists are increasingly recognising that unhealed trauma creates repetition compulsion behaviour and "*the most common cause of social and domestic violence is due to post traumatic stress disorder*" (Berceli, 1998:4). Wineman (2003) has developed the concept 'power-under', which describes the enormously powerful impact that someone, who is unhealed from trauma, can have on anyone in their path, when acting from an internal state of powerless rage. He argues that power-under contributes to an array of broader problems which plague social change efforts including rioting; our tendencies to demonise and dehumanise the oppressor; our reluctance or inability as oppressed people to also recognise our own oppressor roles. "*When we are entrenched in the identity of victim, acutely aware of the ways that we have been acted upon and violated, it becomes extraordinarily difficult psychologically to recognise the humanity of our oppressors or to acknowledge the possibility that we ourselves could hold the kind of objective power, agency and capacity to do harm associated with oppressor roles* (p. 90).

The Capacitar practices engage the emotional/limbic brain by helping it to unblock energy and facilitate a moving forward by reprogramming it through bodywork. The focus on the body and its connection to the emotional centre of the brain helps us adapt to present conditions, instead of continuing to react to past experiences. The limbic brain is free to redirect habitual energy set in place by past experiences into new experiences, free from the past. The Capacitar technique also calms feelings of fear and anxiety and may help us avoid becoming like our oppressors. This could be why, after doing a set of Capacitar exercises, participants often describe their feeling state as 'lighter or well'.

Another common reflection about Capacitar is, "the exercise helps me to be one with the others"[15]. The various Capacitar practices appear to have an impact not only on the emotional brain but also activate or help participants access the 'connecting' capacity that is inherent in us as human beings. When we have faced violence, abuse or entrenched systems of exclusion, it is easy to feel separate, dissociated/disconnected from our own and others' humanity. This often results in rigid ways of being and responding to others. Capacitar exercises contribute to a softening of these positions, creating a greater spaciousness and emotional openness. Feeling more 'one with others' helps the participants move beyond the identities of religion, gender, language, class, education, etc., that separate us, and allows them to consider new ideas because they can now listen to each other with less anxiety and fear. This is vital in a feminist social transformation organisation or process that demands commitment to a shared cause and a collective process because you cannot feel separate or disconnected and be an effective part of such a process. Capacitar practices, thus, contribute to our larger cause by helping people to unblock energies, open up emotionally and reconnect to others and be part of a shared mission.

Creating Learning Spaces that are Respectful, Inclusive and Transformatory

Transformational work which can facilitate the development of more inclusive and holistic communities, requires the creation of a learning space in which participants can be honest, feel valued, heard and respected. Participants often feel 'safe' in such spaces. Feelings of safety arise when we feel recognised and accepted as a person. Safety is maintained when we are listened to and when we strive towards mutual understanding.

It is important to clarify that what we mean by a respectful, inclusive

15 (Farhan Haibe, Somali male participant, 2007).

and transformatory space is not one where difficulties or differences are not raised. It is, in fact, a space where diversity can be expressed and genuinely honoured, where challenges are taken up that may even lead to participants feeling uncomfortable and where conflict can be managed respectfully and constructively. This means being able to express opinions and ideas that may be unpopular with colleagues or contrary to the organisation's politics—opinions, for instance, on issues such as sexual orientation/preference, on women's reproductive rights (including abortion), on faith or religion—without feeling stigmatised or silenced. The mainstay of this method of processing is an intense democratic conversation in which participants do not feel rejected or excluded. We have explored some practices that help establish and maintain inclusive spaces and set up the conditions for deeply democratic conversations.

The facilitators' attitudes and intention are also essential aspects that help establish the feeling of safety. The intention to hold an open space, a willingness to welcome any and all contributions, a steady and warm mood—all of these help create an atmosphere of respect and care. The acceptance that we will also be 'changed' in the process and a willingness to allow our own prejudices and biases to be challenged also goes a long way.

An atmosphere of invitation rather than prescription is equally essential. We must invite people to be free, to bring all of themselves in, to feel relaxed and to have fun. The facilitator is free to choose a methodology that he/she may feel is culturally appropriate, including singing and dancing[16]. During the discussion, participants are invited to give each other feedback in the form of probing questions rather than telling each other what to do. This invitation to participate with one's whole being, helps create a sense of trust and community.

Conversation should be conducted in a manner that encourages listening, asking questions that promote deeper understanding and non-judgmental feedback. It is essential that people feel free to say whatever they need to. This kind of interaction takes developmental, cultural and historical contexts very seriously. We encourage parti-
-cipants to raise questions, thoughts, or issues that are uncomfortable or even cause tension or conflict. When there is a disagreement or diversity it is vital to emphasise that while there may be a difference of opinion, the participants must not feel that they are being attacked.

16 In a recent workshop I learned that while singing and dancing are great tools to build team spirit and to generate a vibrant energy, they are not necessarily that helpful in transforming deep states of anxiety or fear. Other practices described later in the toolkit such as Tai Chi or EFT are more useful for such purposes.

This enables them to move between positions and to practice dialogue and fluidity, as opposed to claiming rigidly fixed positions that have to be defended. In this kind of feedback, the focus is more on the feelings and thoughts of the participants rather than an attack on the 'others' position.

Lastly, we believe that a deep dialogue does and should unsettle any previously set attitudes or perceptions. Conditions need to be created that enable this fluidity and movement. What is crucial in this process is that the facilitator does not seek to dominate, control or prescribe to participants. We must trust the participants to have the capability to increase their understanding of themselves and of the world they live in. We also believe that participating in conversations of the kind described above opens people to unexpected insights, creative strategising and a deeper sense of energy and resilience.

Why a Safe Space Makes a Difference[17]

Farmworker (woman): *Exercises outside (Tai Chi) were good. I came here stressed; there were many issues on our farm—dismissals and evictions. Both my husband and son were dismissed. The exercises helped me and my body. When we walked around and told each other's stories, it was good and wonderful. It helped me learn what situation other women sit in.*

Farmworker (woman): *Things worked well because the facilitators were respectful in relating to each other, they were mindful of everybody in the room, not forcing people and making everybody a part of the processes. It made everybody feel included. The way you did things made it an equality balance in drawing on people who are quiet. The exercises helped a lot. Thank you for the space because I could tell you things because the space is safe. ...I struggled with myself for quite some time to sit still and listen. When it clicks in my mind, I have to control myself to listen and reflect and not talk. And that's something that I need to work on more.*

Farmworker (man): *I am going to thank all of you ladies. It is not everywhere that you feel welcome with all this gender equity flying around, you get into an environment that is really hostile. Thank you for accommodating me and making me feel at home*

17 These quotes come from notes taken by Michel Friedman at various Gender at Work peer learning meetings in South Africa.

as the only male. I can feel and see that I am not where I was and I think it is all because of this process. What has been put in and what has been said has helped me deal with some personal issues for myself and for my organisation. We have managed to deal with some stuff. The camaraderie has helped you think harder, work harder and say what you think. You won't be laughed at because of what you say; you own the process because people are coming from their experience. This makes it safe for people to talk.

Farmworker (woman): *The environment worked very well. Here, there is a lot of respect for each other. It also brings out and makes the human being think bigger. The place is respected, so it brings forward the respect for each other. The place also has a calming effect, although we are in Johannesburg, you would not know it. ...Family is important, but I need to love myself more. I want people to see the difference without me having to tell them. I want them to know that they are just as important in God's eyes; we all have dignity and have the right to be respected.*

I like to be honest [in] everything. There is no exception. The thing that touched me the most is sharing the personal stories. The space was so safe, we weren't afraid to speak about stuff. Even for me, telling the people stuff I have had for two months [been carrying], today I am feeling a lot better.

Today we had a lot of laughs, thanks to safe space that has been created for us to speak. The other thing is listening to everyone's story, it makes me realise living on the farms, many people are seeing us as different, but here you don't see us different, at other workshops, they say you farm people, then we have to show them. It's nice, it's not bothering us, "you plaas jappies, you love pap sak".

You create an open space for what is happening in our lives. You find out that I'm not the only one having these problems and you find out solutions after listening to others. Every participant feels at home even for those who come for the first time this session.

Note to facilitators: Refer to p. 3 of the facilitator's guide for specific practices that can be used to help create a safe space.

Practices for Harmonising Body, Mind and Spirit[18]

A key strategy that can assist us in managing negative reactions and harmonise our bodies, minds and spirits, despite the difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves, is to learn how to take care of ourselves by using simple wellness practices on a regular basis. These may be carried out individually or in groups, such as with staff in an organisation or with community members. We have been using these practices now for a number of years in different organisational settings with very inspiring results. We encourage you to experiment with these practices (outlined in the Appendix) and learn for yourselves, what works best for you. If you are facilitating a group but don't feel comfortable using any of these exercises, you can ask for a volunteer who may like these kinds of exercises and you can ask them to facilitate that session. It helps to not make the exercises compulsory but to invite people to participate and also to give space to those who wish not to participate. Often, those who wish to exclude themselves from the exercises see how their colleagues benefit, become curious and after some time wish to try them.

Many of these practices have been taken from the Capacitar toolkit and adapted for use in this context. Where they are not from Capacitar, they have been referenced separately.

The world we live in is in a constant state of change. Today, more than ever before, the rapid changes in science and technology have a profound impact on our lifestyles. Change in personal circumstances is another key factor that causes unhealthy stress and anxiety in people. These changes may be environmental (toxins, heat, cold), psychological (threats to self-esteem, survivor of crime), sociological (unemployment, death of a loved one) or philosophical (use of time, purpose in life). Irrespective of the source of stress, the body's immediate reaction is always the same. The Pituitary, Thyroid, Parathyroid, and Adrenal glands, as well as the Hypothalamus and other parts of the brain become activated. This is known as the fight-or-flight response, which enables the body to immediately react psychologically and physiologically with greater speed and strength. When this happens, our energy gets blocked and we may feel tired or depressed or simply have no energy at all. Even when we encounter symbolic stress factors, the fight-or-flight response gets triggered, although we do not use the energy to take action. This results in a build-up of high blood pressure,

18 These practices have been drawn and adapted from the Capacitar Wellness Practices http://www.capacitar.org/publications.html and Jin Shin Jyutsu http://jsjinc.net.

tightness in muscles, cholesterol and stomach acid. If the stress reaction is chronic or prolonged, it leads to illness and disease.

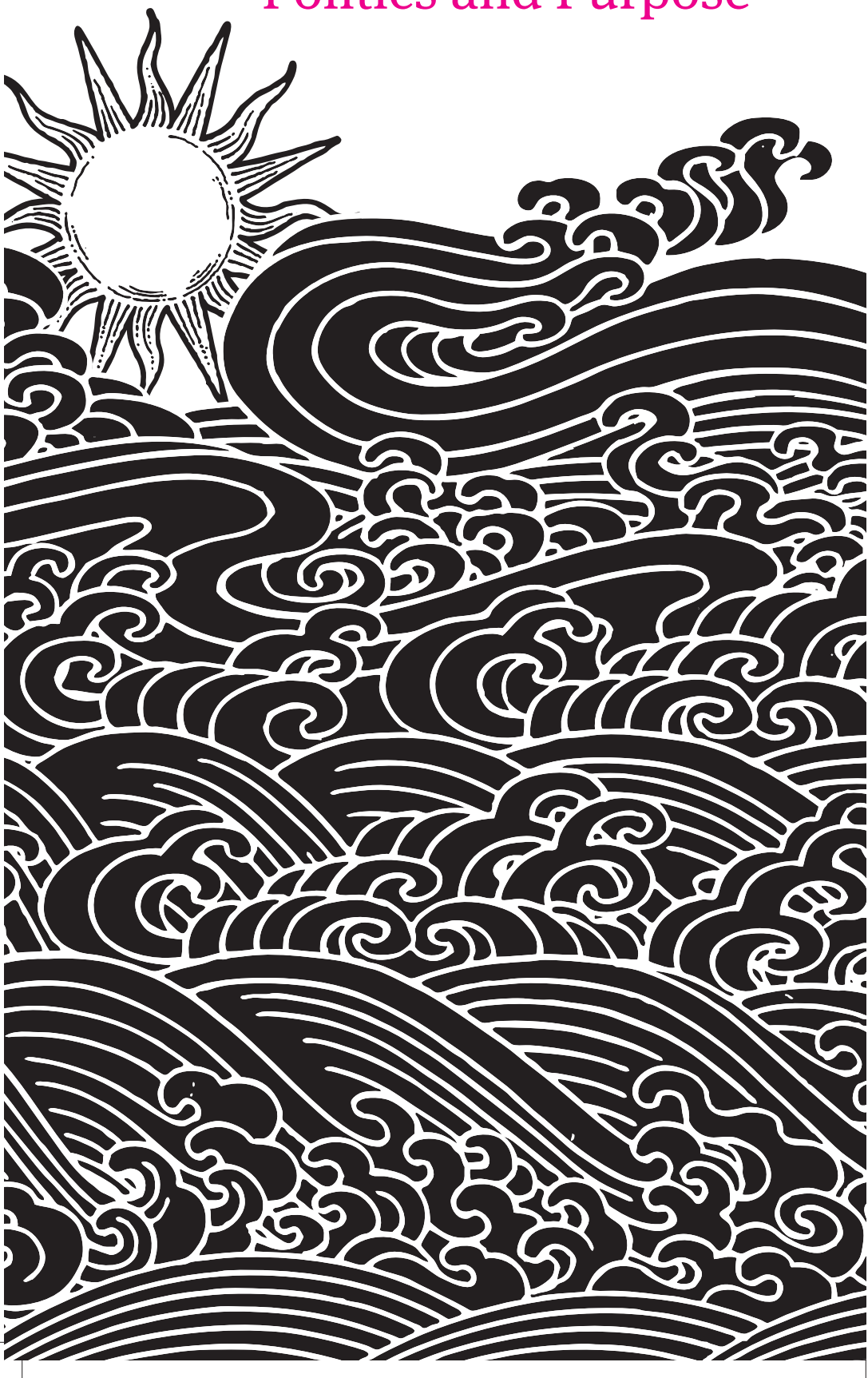
The techniques and practices outlined in Appendix enable us to take control of ourselves and our bodies to prevent the fight-or-flight response from developing, when we encounter symbolic threats. When practiced regularly, these practices will prevent illness and disease and allow us to live our lives well. We will also feel more energised, less depressed, less despondent, and most of all, we will not be at the mercy of unconscious triggers that feel beyond our control.

Conclusion

The practices/exercises we offer in this toolkit are designed to engage ourselves and the people we work with in deep transformation. To this extent, we return to the old feminist adage, 'the personal is political'. We do not believe it is possible to transform the social without also transforming the personal.

MODULE 2

Articulating our Politics and Purpose



This module helps us to address one of the four 'P's of transformative feminist leadership—the purpose and politics of our organisation. We begin with this 'P' because our ***politics*** (what we believe in and our vision for a better social order) and our ***purpose*** (social change goals that emerge from our vision) should be the guiding force behind our actions. Moreover, we have observed in Module 1 that in all feminist initiatives, the self is ever present, and the personal is the political. Thus, our purpose includes the transformation of all relations of power that oppress, discriminate or exclude anyone on the basis of their gender, class, race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation or any other identity. It also means that our structures and ways of working and treating each other, reflect and help us experience feminist politics and purpose within our own organisation.

Transformative feminist leaders will always establish clarity around the politics and purpose of the organisation and ensure that every member of the organisation is involved in framing them and thus shares a commitment to the organisation's vision and mission.

The purpose of this module is therefore to help you:

1. Clarify and collectively frame (or reframe, if they already exist), the vision (politics) and the mission (purpose) of your organisation.
2. Build a sense of ownership towards the vision and mission by engaging the entire team in the process.
3. Use these articulations as touchstones or yardsticks when we face challenges or lose our way.

Before starting this module, we strongly recommend that all participants read pages 31 and 32 ("What's in it? Unpacking Feminist Leadership"), and pages 51-56 ("Politics" and "Practice") of the concept

paper. We assume that you have read and familiarised yourself with the concepts in Module 1 ("Transformative Feminist Leadership and the Self"), and the exercises in the appendix. Together, these will help you understand the logic behind the exercises in this module, as well as the role of non-intellectual energies and emotional factors that come into play. However, before we proceed any further, some clarity about vision and mission, and the difference between the two, may be useful.

- ***Vision is the dream or image of how we would like the world to be***. Our picture of a 'perfect world', if you like. Our politics is reflected in the vision of the world that we wish to see, because it's about what we believe in, our sense of right and wrong, of justice. A vision may not necessarily become a reality in our own lifetime or within the lifespan of our organisation. For example, we may dream of a world where no woman faces violence because of her gender, or that we live in a peaceful and just world without poverty or discrimination, even though we know that this may take a very long time and many different struggles to become a reality. Despite that, a vision is important because it is like a guiding star that helps us navigate the work of our organisation and movement and assists us in making the right choices at critical moments.
- ***Our mission is that part of the vision that we work towards making a reality in a specific period of time, within our lifetime.*** This could include ending a civil war or ethnic conflict, imposing stronger legal penalties for violence against women, etc. Our mission, therefore, is our *purpose,* the reason we are doing what we do. The methods we use to work towards our mission constitute our ***strategies*** for change. Some organisations may already have a written vision and mission statement; if that's true for yours, please keep this ready so that the group can use it in the exercise.

Exercise 1 (2-3 HOURS)

Identifying our Politics and Imagining our Vision

In this exercise, we will attempt to frame the politics of our organisation more clearly. This involves visualising the world we'd like to see in the form of an image or a picture. At the start of the exercise, the facilitator asks everyone in the group to close their eyes, after which the steps given below are followed.

- Relax and breathe deeply for about 3-6 breaths, exhaling any stress or tension you may be holding in your body.
- Now imagine that five to ten years have passed and the strategies adopted by your organisation have been very successful. Try to visualise what this success looks like—allow the images to rise in your mind spontaneously. What do you see? More specifically,
  - What are the different groups of people (women and men, boys and girls) in the communities you work with thinking, feeling or doing?
  - What is different about their relationships with each other?
  - If there are any other stakeholders such as government officials, elected representatives, community leaders, business people, other civil society organisations or NGOs, what are they thinking, feeling or doing?
- Now shift your focus to your organisation, i.e. imagine what your organisation looks like, five years from now.
  - What are the people thinking, feeling or doing?
  - How do people in the organisation relate to each other?
  - You may add this picture to the vision statement at the end of this exercise.
- Once you have a clear sense of what you see, make a drawing of what you have visualised. Give each person about fifteen minutes to make their drawing.
- Depending on the number of participants, make small groups (of 3, 4, or 5 participants) and share your images with each other.
- Now try to make a combined drawing by identifying the most critical elements of each individual drawing. Create a collective image using the two or three most important things that you would like to see.

- Next, the whole team sits together and each group shares and interprets their images.
- Now try to create one big picture, following the same process as before. Draw a collective image of what you would all like to see as a result of your work in the next five to ten years. The more specific and clear this picture is, the easier it is to work towards realising it. You may have two separate images—one of what the community will look like and the other of what your organisation will look like— throughout the whole process. However, if you choose to do this, the exercise may take a bit longer.
- Using the collective drawing/picture as an inspiration and a starting point, articulate the vision of your organisation in words: what kind of a world are you hoping to see, what will be the situation of the people /communities you work with? What kind of vision of the world is motivating your work as an organisation? Write down this vision. A vision is usually a short and clear picture. Please look at the vision of the feminist organisation, CREA, given below.

> CREA's Vision: CREA envisions a more just and peaceful world, where everyone lives with dignity, respect, and equality.

- If your organisation already has a vision statement, bring it out now and compare it with the one the group has developed. What is the difference between the two statements? Discuss how you would like to integrate the results of your exercise with the vision statement of your organisation, so that it is more reflective of your collective vision of the world.

Exercise 2 (2-3[1] HOURS)

Articulating our purpose/mission

1. Sit down by yourself in a quiet place and practice either abdominal breathing or the 'Big Hug' (both described in the appendix) for five minutes.

2. Then, feeling energised and centred, and building further on the vision statement that the group has articulated, take ten minutes to write down what your organisation is doing to turn this vision into a reality, i.e. what according to you is the primary *purpose* of your organisation. Use the questions given below to help you reflect on this and then frame your reflections as a 'purpose' or 'mission' statement.
   a. What is the problem your organisation is addressing?
   b. Who is the primary target group or community it is concerned about?
   c. What change is it is trying to achieve?
   d. What makes the purpose feminist (putting gender equality and women's interests at the centre)? In other words, what makes your purpose distinct from that of others who may be addressing the same issues from a non-feminist perspective?

3. Present your individual statements to the group. Appoint a facilitator for a group discussion.

4. If your organisation / movement has a written mission statement or statement of purpose, put it up on a chart or board where everyone can see it. If there is no written mission statement, go to step 6.

5. Spend the next hour comparing your individual reflections with the written purpose/mission statement. Use the exercise to:
   a. Sharpen and align your individual understanding with the purpose and politics of the organisation, especially from a feminist perspective.
   b. Expand, revise or modify the existing organisational mission / purpose of the organisation using reflections from the individual exercise, if the group feels these inputs will strengthen and sharpen the existing purpose. The goal here

---

1 The length of time for this exercise depends on whether the organisation has a written statement of mission/purpose or not. If it does not, it may take a lot longer to formulate one; if it does, it may take a shorter time to revise or sharpen it.

is not just to play with words, but to actually articulate the purpose of the organisation in a clearer, more meaningful way.

c. Achieve clarity on the *feminist nature* of your purpose—what makes your mission different from that of others who may be working with a similar vision?

6. If your organisation does NOT have a written mission/purpose statement, do the following:

   a. If you are a large group (more than twenty people), work in smaller groups of four to five people. Use the individual reflections to build a collective mission/purpose statement for your small group. Put your group's mission statement on a chart so that it can be shared with the larger group.

   b. Now gather together as a larger group and ask each small group to present their mission statement. Using these, build a collective mission/statement of purpose for the organisation that the entire group agrees on and that includes important elements from the statement of each small group. This will now serve as the mission statement for the organisation.

   c. If you are less than twenty people, you can move directly from the individual exercise to the full group, and use the individual reflections to frame a shared purpose statement that the entire group agrees on, and that your organisation can use, henceforward, as its mission statement.

Look at the following mission statement of the feminist organisation, CREA, working on gender, sexuality and rights, arrived at through precisely such a process to get an idea of what the end result might look like.

> CREA's Mission: *CREA builds feminist leadership, advances women's human rights, and expands sexual and reproductive freedoms.*

Exercise 3 (1 ½ - 2 HOURS)

Force Field (or Context) Analysis

This third exercise is designed to identify the key actors and factors that are involved in, benefit from or might work against your vision and mission. Which actors/forces will likely be **for** the change you seek, and which ones will be **against** it? Since feminist leadership is generally engaged in transformative work, it is important to map the forces for and against the organisation's mission and vision, using a feminist analysis of the context in which the organisation is trying to make a change. Please refer to the figure 2.1 to get an idea of how to create a force field analysis.

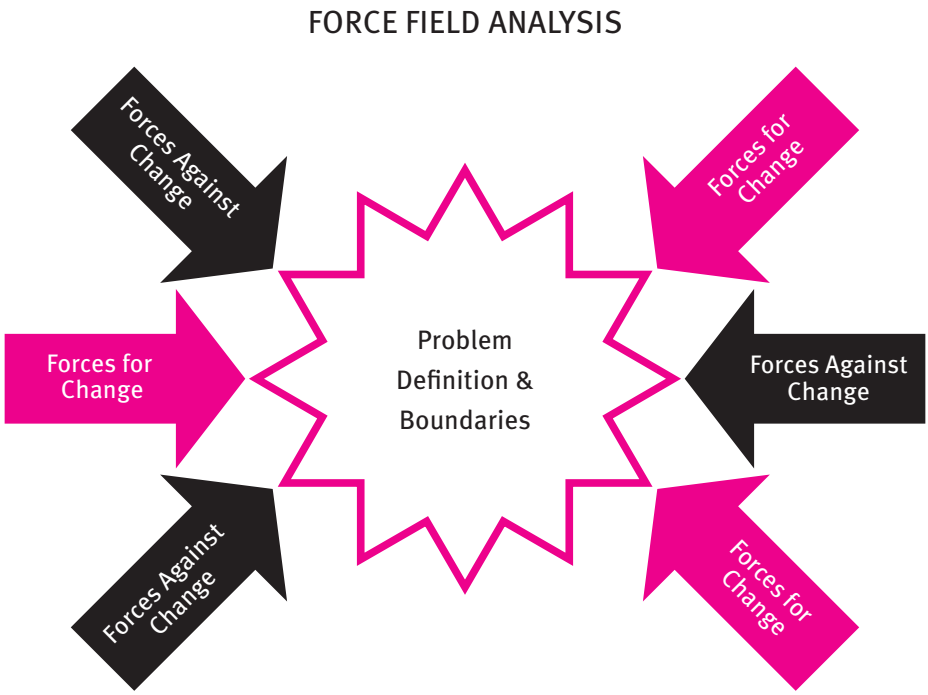


Figure 2.1. Creating a force field analysis.

- Try to develop a force field analysis for your organisation on a chart. You may add as many arrows for and against the change as you wish. Remember, this needs to be a 'Big Picture' analysis, so don't do it based on the situation prevalent in one village or around any particular strategy of your work, but the overall context that your organisation is trying to change. Please refer to the figure 2.2 given below to see an illustration of a force field map.

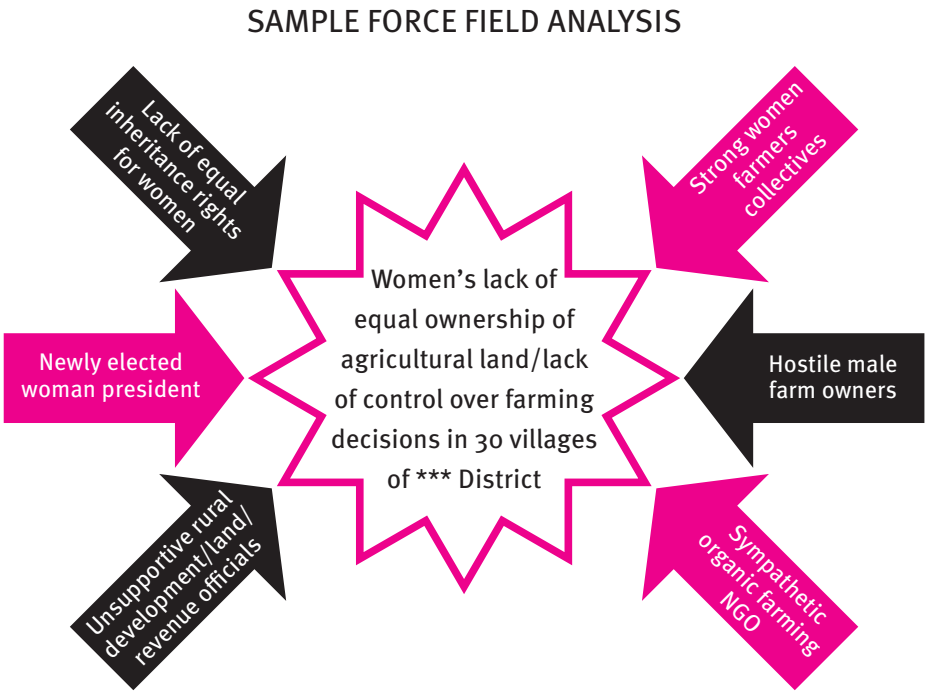


Figure 2.2. Sample of a force field analysis.

- Building a force field analysis collectively is a good feminist leadership exercise as it involves everybody in understanding the context, and the the forces for and against change, and thus the rationale behind the strategies and strategic decisions of the organisation. Strong feminist leaders periodically engage their teams in this kind of analysis so that each member of the team can take leadership of the change process at their own level and in their own role, with a clear understanding of the larger context and the politics and purpose of the organisation.

Theory of Change (TOC)

Force field analysis can be used as a foundational step in constructing a Theory of Change—something that many organisations are required to do today. This involves identifying the *assumptions* behind your mission and vision and what causes change (sometimes called 'causality'), i.e. which interventions lead to which changes, in which direction. Feminist theories of change are distinctly different from other TOCs because their starting point is gender power relations and how the change process works, in terms of shifting gender power in the public, private and intimate spheres. Constructing a force field analysis and a theory of change helps the entire team to achieve greater clarity about the why and how of the vision and mission of the organisation

and therefore, helps them take greater ownership and this is good feminist leadership practice. According to Gerda Lerner:

> *"To create something that replaces and surpasses you, that has a life of its own because there are many people who will be drawn into it and who will give leadership to it as a group, even if you move on or go away. To me, that has always been the measure of leadership."* [2]

If you want to build a more conscious and articulated theory of change based on your mission statement, use the following link to download a document with exercises that will help you to do so[3]: www.enablingchange.com.au/How_to_make_a_theory_of_change.pdf

Congratulations! You have now built a visual image of the change you wish to see, articulated your mission statement, analysed the forces that will act for and against the change you seek and possibly, even formulated a theory of change.

You may even have identified your politics and purpose, i.e. what you believe is right and what you believe is wrong, how you think it should be changed and how to harness your allies and deal with your opponents. Through this process, you have of course, implicitly or indirectly, touched upon some of your core values.

In the next module, we will explore the core values and principles that inform our goals and vision more clearly.

---

2 Gerda Lerner, 1995. "Leadership: Feminist, Spiritual, and Political", *Woman of Power* 24 (44).

3 Les Robinson, 2009, "How to Make a Theory of Change", Enabling Change, Australia

MODULE 3

Articulating our Values and Principles

Unpacking our Values/Principles

In the previous module, we tried to gain greater clarity about one part of our leadership diamond: our politics and purpose, by articulating our vision and mission in a more explicit and comprehensive way and by trying to identify the feminist nature of this vision and mission. We did this to stand back a little from our day-to-day work and see the 'big picture', and also to get a clear guiding framework. This is important to not only avoid confusion, but to help guide our decisions and choices when there is uncertainty and confusion, pressure from the outside world or pressure for resources and organisational survival. But deeply embedded in our politics and purpose are certain values or core principles—the other vital 'P' in the leadership diamond! Our values spring from our vision of the world as we want to see it, because that 'perfect' world cannot be realised unless it is shaped by certain values and principles.

The purpose of this module is to help us:

1. Articulate the values and principles that guide our work and the quality of life within our organisation;
2. Identify ways in which we can frame the operational principles that will ensure that we are actually implementing our organisational values in the policies and daily practices of our organisation; and
3. Discover ways of translating our values into practice so that the organisation becomes a place that people love to work in and be part of—a positive, empowering, fun and just place of work.

But what, in fact, do values and principles mean? What is the difference between them? There are hundreds of different definitions of these concepts, but for our purpose, we shall consider the following meanings:

Values are personal beliefs or judgements about what we believe are important in life and in the world, and about how people should treat each other. Values are the basis on which we make decisions about right and wrong, good and bad. Values of a person may be described as the subjective ideals, individual traits and personal beliefs that person may feel attracted towards. These values may vary across people and cultures and are not necessarily related to ethical standards. Personal values evolve from circumstances and may change over time. Values include concepts such as freedom, security, autonomy, creativity and excellence.

Principles are very similar to values, but refer to the more universally accepted ideals or beliefs about the norms and standards that should govern the behaviour of individuals, organisations and institutions (such as the government, judiciary, etc.) in a society. Trust, equality, fairness/justice, respect, honesty, truthfulness, compassion and the integrity of human life and equal rights of all human beings are examples of some universal principles.

Feminist Principles

Since we are concerned with advancing feminist leadership, we need to focus on the distinct nature of feminist principles and the values that stem from these. Feminist principles have been articulated in a variety of ways, emphasising different core ideals, but given below are a few that are common to almost all of these:

- **The personal is political:** This is the key principle that distinguishes feminism—the belief that what we do in our personal lives has a political meaning and impact and what we do politically—such as through our activism and social change strategies—has impact and meaning in our personal lives. No other ideology has linked these two as strongly as feminism!
- **Biology is not destiny:** Feminism was the first ideology that challenged the social differentiation that is based on biology—that is, on the sex of the individual—and the idea that one's sex should form the basis of one's social destiny, or the opportunities, rights, privileges, duties and private and public roles that one is permitted. The principle that biology should not be the basis of one's role in the world has had enormous and continuing significance, also in the movements of people of different sexual orientations and abilities.
- **Equality:** Feminism has put the principle of gender equality at the centre of social change processes in a way that no other social

justice movements (movements for racial or class equality) have been able to do. Feminists have demonstrated both in concept and practice, that equality without gender equality is incomplete.

- **Inclusion and diversity:** Going a step beyond equality, feminism recognised that it is easy to have formal equality, such as in law, without any real change in the daily practices of power. Or that equality for women as a category has little meaning as long as women of specific castes, classes, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, occupations or abilities continue to be excluded or discriminated against. Feminism therefore, advanced the notion of 'intersectionality'[1], and embraced the principles of celebrating diversity in identities. It has also promoted the principle of inclusion. This means looking out for women who get excluded in any set of social arrangements, and working to ensure they are brought into the social spectrum. Diversity and inclusion go much further than the older principles of 'tolerance' and 'acceptance'.
- **Peace and security:** With some exceptions, feminism has largely advocated peace and non-violence, though there are examples of feminist struggles that have been quite militant. The principle of security has become very important in recent years with the rise of war and conflict and particularly the rise of crimes against women as a part of conflict. Security is also important in the sense of women's right to move about freely in the world, such as on a city street at night, without becoming targets of sexual violence. It also includes the right to live securely in one's communities and pursue one's livelihood without fear or disruption.
- **Bodily integrity and freedom from violence of any kind:** In the same vein, feminism has long stood for women's right to their physical integrity and freedom from mental or physical abuse or violence. Disabled women in particular have applied this principle to fight for their right to be treated as complete human beings, regardless of the nature of their disability. This principle includes women's right to reproductive and sexual choice and freedom—the right to make decisions about their bodies, without fear of violence, ostracism or exclusion.

A recent articulation of some key feminist principles has been presented in the following box to illustrate what principles and values mean in the feminist context:

---

1 The intersecting way in which different identities and locations on a social spectrum coincide to create unique forms of exclusion or privilege.

From Changing their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements[2]

"What is feminism today?

"We now stand not only **for gender equality**, but **for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalise any set of people, women and men, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste or ethnicity.** We do not seek simplistic parity with men that would give us the damaging privileges and power that men have enjoyed and end in losing many of the so-called "feminine" strengths and capacities that women have been socialised to embody. But we seek a transformation that would create gender equality within an entirely new social order – one in which both men and women can individually and collectively live as human beings in societies built on social and economic equality, enjoy the full range of rights, live in harmony with the natural world and are liberated from violence, conflict and militarisation.

In the current global crisis of rising food prices, exorbitant energy costs, and the nightmare of climate change, feminism **stands for economic policies based upon food security, clean renewable energy and ecological soundness, in order to ensure a sustainable future for the planet, all its species and its natural resources**.

Given the experience of the gendered and inequitable impacts of neo-liberalism and globalisation, we also stand **for economic transformation that creates greater social equity and human development**, rather than mere economic growth.

We stand **for political transformation that guarantees full citizenship rights, the full body of human rights and for secular, plural, democratic regimes that are transparent, accountable and responsive to all their citizens, women and men**.

Escalating levels of war and civil conflict, the conflict-related displacement and subjugation of both women and men, and increasing use of sexual violence against women as a political tool, have led feminists to **oppose violence** of any kind and to **stand against wars and conflicts that displace, violate, subjugate and impoverish both women and men**. Conversely, **we stand for peace and non-violence**

---

2 Taken from Srilatha Batliwala, 2008, "Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements", Toronto, AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development), 1st ed., p. 11-12.

– and for peaceful resolution of disputes achieved through inclusive and participatory processes.

We stand for **responsible co-dependence rather than individualism**, but believe in the **right to freedom of choice of individuals** with respect to their private lives. We oppose the rampant promotion of consumerism that continues to objectify both men and women and which promotes the wasteful use of the planet's natural resources and devastates the environment.

Feminism stands for the power to, not power over – we struggle to **change the practice of power** both within our own structures and movements as well as in the social, economic and political institutions we engage. This has created a set of "feminist ethics" which, although they vary in different parts of the world, contain some common principles at the core: creating less vertical and more horizontal, participatory and democratic power and decision-making structures, greater transparency and openness about internal and external processes and finances, ensuring a voice and role for all key stakeholders, internal and external and building a sense of solidarity/sorority/inclusion, a strong sense of accountability to our constituents and to the larger movements we are linked to, creating flexible, gender-sensitive internal policies and practices based on respect for different capacities and generally, pursuing non-violent strategies of action. These ethics underlie the struggle, in most feminist movements and organisations, to create feminist ways of working.

Consequently, we support the **renewal of our own organisations and movements** through empowering new generations of actors and leaders, and **creating respectful spaces and roles** for the beginners, the experienced and the wise.

Finally, **we stand against all ideologies and all forms of fundamentalisms – that advocate against women's equal rights or against the human rights of any people,** be it on the basis of economic, social, racial, ethnic, religious, political or sexual identity.

Why does Articulating our Values and Principles Matter?

Women's organisations often pride themselves on their value-driven politics and strategies and on the principles that underlie their cause, such as human rights, equality, peace, inclusiveness, democratic functioning, respect for the dignity of all people, etc. However, even as we advance these values in the work we do, and in our transactions with governments, communities and other actors we engage with in the change process, we often violate them—knowingly or unknowingly—within our own organisations and in our inter-personal interactions in the organisational setting. Feminist leadership therefore, aspires to bridge these gaps and to create a greater synergy between the values and practices in all spheres of their lives.

Many organisations do not have a clearly articulated set of core values, which makes it much more difficult for them to assess whether their practices and organisational culture are in harmony or not. This module will help organisations with stated values to assess these gaps, and those without a formally developed values statement to frame and articulate their values. More importantly, it will help both types of organisations to put into place a process to translate their values into a set of operational principles that can guide their actions and particularly, the actions and conduct of those in leadership roles. It will also help frame or revise already framed organisational policies. And all these steps are critical elements of transformative feminist leadership and of 'becoming the change' we claim we want to see in the world.

Before going further, we strongly recommend reading pages 40-50 ("Power in Organisations" and "Principles and Values") of the Feminist Leadership concept paper. This analysis illustrates that there are at least five important steps in bringing value-driven consistency into our leadership practices and organisational life: These include:

1. **Articulating and enshrining the values we commit to in some formal way,** so that they are not a vague, shifting set of ideas, but more visible, transparent norms to which we can hold ourselves to account. The goal is not to create a static set of values that never change, but to periodically reframe and re-articulate our value base as one of the cornerstones of our politics, our organisational practice and an expression of our accountability to each other.
2. **Translating our values into practical norms by developing operational principles** that will put each value into practice in a concrete and tangible way. At the end of this section, for instance, you will find an example of how the feminist organisation, JASS

(Just Associates) articulated the core values that shape their organisational culture and then established the corresponding operational principles that would transform those values into tangible organisational practices.

3. Some organisational thinkers have observed that, there is often a 'cultural distance' that individuals have to walk from their personal, individual values and beliefs to those of the organisation in which they work. For example, the organisation may believe in the concept of equal pay for equal work or gender equality or the equal value and dignity of different roles and work performed in the organisation, but we as individuals may have difficulty with some of these as we may have been brought up to think differently. In certain cases, some people may believe that their personal values are in fact superior to those of the organisation. Therefore, we need to **reflect on the synchronicity and gaps between our personal values and principles and those of the organisation we work in and determine how we will manage them.**

4. **'Deep structure' cultural values and the gaps between values and practice** are so pervasive that they **are deeply embedded in our psyche**. So, as much as we think we are opposed to these dichotomies or fighting against them, the tolerance of these gaps and these deeply entrenched ways of being, is widespread and even unconscious. Therefore, while we may not overtly be in conflict with the stated value 'in our heads', because of our own complex histories we may act in ways that conflict with it in our practice. For example, if we have grown up in an authoritarian society, we may ourselves become authoritarian even though our mission and vision may be quite the opposite.

   As feminist women, **we may sometimes flounder because we aspire to very high standards, to a lofty ideal, a kind of perfectionism in our politics, values, structures and processes that is very difficult to achieve in reality.** In this sense, we seem to set ourselves up to fail. So the key is, to quote Gandhi's famous phrase, to always *be in a process of* 'becoming the change we want to see in the world'. This gives us some breathing space as imperfect beings, while simultaneously building a culture of accountability vis à vis our values and ideals. In other words, we must constantly acknowledge the difficulties of achieving what we set out to do, be compassionate towards our own struggle to get there and towards others who are engaged in that struggle too. At the same time, we must avoid supporting authoritarian/controlling behaviour patterns that we have internalised and normalised, irrespective of where they stem from. We need to

understand that we are trying to overcome deeply embedded patterns and relationships, especially with regard to power, in order to build something better; we may not always get it right. Therefore, we must be aware of this tension and create mechanisms to keep ourselves accountable to the end goal and find different ways of dealing with our shortcomings while getting there.

5. The final piece of the struggle is therefore to **set up mechanisms that enable us to assess the operational health of our value base periodically—**how big is the gap between our values and our practices? How empowered or disempowered are people in the organisation feeling? How supportive or oppressive is our leadership as experienced by those who work with us? These mechanisms need not be processes devoted exclusively to this purpose, but they can be activated during routine events such as annual retreats, monthly review meetings, conflict resolution mechanisms, etc. The important thing is to make the assessment of these issues a dedicated part of the agenda.

Exercise 1 (1 ½ HOURS)

Envisioning the organisation where we love to work

We begin by trying to imagine and visualise the kind of place we want our organisation to be—the atmosphere, the relationships between the people working there, how people in leadership roles behave and relate to other employees, their ways of working and how differences and problems are resolved. The idea here is not to create a perfect organisation that is wonderful to work in, but not very effective in advancing the feminist goals of a more just, gender-equal, rights-affirming and inclusive society. Instead, try to imagine what an ideal, healthy and *socially effective* feminist organisation would be like.

1. Start with deep breathing to settle and centre yourselves, to go to a calm place within you.
2. Form small groups of five to six people. Provide each group with some chart papers and a quiet corner to work in.
3. Within each group, start by imagining what the organisation look and feel like, if it was the ideal place to work in. Some of you may be lucky enough to find your organisation is quite close to the ideal, in which case just think about what makes it ideal. For others, where the organisational climate is not so positive, think about how you want to feel when you come to work each day. Recall some actual scenarios and situations that you have experienced and imagine how they would unfold or be resolved in an ideal organisation. Use the following questions to help you create a mental image of the organisation.
    a. What is the atmosphere like—is it cheerful, happy, relaxed, light?
    b. What is the quality of the relationship between different people working in the organisation? Is it relaxed, respectful, equal, supportive, appreciative, trusting?
    c. How do people in formal leadership roles behave? Are they accessible and open, appreciative, fair, honest, direct, respectful towards all, good listeners, supportive, facilitative and consultative? Are they able to take decisions when they have to?
    d. How well-informed are you about the policies, decision-making systems, resources, salary scales, etc. of the organisation?

e. How well-informed are you about the things you need to know to do your own job well?

f. Move beyond yourself and try to imagine the experience of your colleagues. How do they feel? Are they also feeling empowered or is it just you who is feeling that way?

g. Now think about the people your organisation is working for. How well do the organisational values and their practices reflect the needs and aspirations of the constituency/ the community that it serves? After all, the purpose of the organisation is not only to make you feel good, but to also mirror its larger mission. How does the community feel toward the organisation? Do they feel like recipients, beneficiaries or stakeholders that can hold it to account? Do they have any knowledge about its policies, strategies or resources? Do they feel represented and prioritised?

4. Now, working back from this vision of the ideal, try to identify the values that are in place and are being practiced within the organisation in order to make this kind of an atmosphere possible.

5. For each value that you identify, try to think about how it translates into actual practice within organisational life. For example, if the values identified are 'openness' or 'democratic practices', how the organisation actually put those values into practice? Is the staff encouraged to speak honestly about what they are doing or feeling and where they have failed or succeeded? Is everyone's voice and opinion solicited and respected? Is each person given some opportunity to influence organisational decisions and practices?

6. All the groups can now come back to the larger group and share the values they have identified as critical to organisational health.

7. A free-writing or buzz session at the end of this exercise may be useful to assess what everyone is feeling at the end of it and to surface and deal with any discomfort or tension this exercise may have generated as a result of the gap between vision and reality.

If any participant is still feeling disturbed, we suggest they use the Emotional Freedom Technique to help address it. They can either do this individually or the group could do it collectively. (Please refer to the Appendix, p. 107-111).

Exercise 2 (3 HOURS)

What are the current organisational values in practice?

Having visualised the organisation that would be a great place to work in and that reflects the priorities and aspirations of its constituency and mission, we must now look at the reality to see where the gaps are and how we can reduce or close them. The purpose of the following exercises is to assess how we can move closer to the ideal by examining the actual organisational values in practice and what changes we need to make to harmonise them. Given that there is a lot of work to be done here and that the exercises could unleash a lot of tension or even confrontation, we have broken them up into different parts that can be conducted on different days. We strongly recommend, for the same reason, that a skilled, neutral external facilitator be appointed to conduct them and that adequate time be spent on constructing some ground rules and creating a safe space (refer to Module 1) before you begin.

Part 1: Identifying the gaps and alternative mechanisms

1. Form small groups of five to six people. Everyone must close their eyes and take a few moments to visualise a recent situation where there was a conflict between team members or a difficult decision had to be taken. This could be internal to the organisation or in its programmes/field work.
2. After ten minutes, open your eyes and share the experience that came to your mind with your group.
3. The group now picks one particular situation from the various experiences and discusses what happened—who did what, who said what, what the outcome was.
4. Each group then analyses the values that were demonstrated or reflected by the practice in that situation and compares it with how the situation would have been handled in the ideal/healthy organisation, they had envisioned in the earlier exercise. Try to spell out how the correct core value can be practiced better in the future and who will be responsible for ensuring this.
5. Discuss whether these values are inherently feminist by looking at the situation from both a feminist and social justice lens. Check whether the alternative handling that you had imagined in the 'ideal' organisation is more clearly reflective of core feminist values and principles.

6. Try to complete at least two examples in each group, that illustrate different core values in practice, with clarity about the individual and collective mechanisms that can be created to ensure implementation in future scenarios of a similar kind. Remember, the responsibility for this has to be shared; it cannot all be placed on a single leader, or someone at the 'top'. Try to spell out how each of us can be responsible, in our own way, for realising these new values and practices.
7. Finish by appointing a presenter from each group who will share the results of group's analysis, when you move into the next part of the exercise.

Please refer to the mind-body exercises given in the appendix to help with the emotions that may have arisen as a result of the above exercise. The Fingerholding exercise (Appendix, p. 102-106) may be helpful, if there is a lot of frustration, anger, sadness or fear. If there are very strong body sensations, you may use the Emotional Freedom Technique (Appendix, p. 107-111).

Part 2: Framing new norms for the practice of positive values

1. The whole team gathers together to continue the exercise begun earlier.
2. Before beginning, practice some Tai Chi (Appendix, p. 112-119) for at least ten minutes to generate some positive energy before proceeding to the next phase of the exercise and to help prepare the participants for sharing their experiences in the larger group.
3. Each small group now shares their list of problematic current values-in-practice and the alternatives and mechanisms for the future that have been identified. DO NOT share the stories or experiences on which this is based, as it may lead to unnecessary tension and conflict. Moreover, the atmosphere in the large group cannot feel as safe as the small group.
4. In this way, develop a complete list of new values-in-practice required to create a healthier organisational environment and identify the mechanisms needed for these values to be implemented.
5. Now discuss what it would take to put these mechanisms into place to bridge the gap between values and practice? Also, decide who will be responsible for executing this at various levels? What will be the role of each individual in closing the gap?
6. Prepare a checklist for action, with specific tasks assigned to

specific individuals or functionaries, including yourself. Use the matrix below to help you organise your action checklist.

	1.	2.	3.
What are the changes required?			
What needs to be done to bring about these changes?			
Who should be responsible for overseeing/enabling these changes?			
Who else has to take responsibility for implementing the changes?			
What are the factors that might go against the changes? How can these be handled/ minimised?			
What is the timeframe or deadline for achieving the changes?			

7. In case the exercise has generated a lot of anger, tension or uncomfortable feelings, please do the Emotional Freedom Technique (Appendix, p. 107-111), or one of the exercises for releasing anger/frustration such as roaring like a lion, or even simply holding your middle finger. You can do these either individually or as a group. If you find that the exercise has triggered deeply held feelings of animosity towards a particular person, you may do the exercise for developing self-awareness on how we can all contribute towards conflicts (Appendix, p. 122-127), which helps to create greater self-awareness, especially in conflict situations.

As an example, we present the core values and operating principles of Just Associates, a feminist organisation (www.justassociates.org).

Just Associates (JASS) Organisational Culture and Operating Principles[3]

JASS (Just Associates) is an international feminist organisation, founded in 2002 as a learning community by a group of activists, popular educators and scholars from thirteen countries. It is driven by its partners and their feminist movement-building initiatives in Mesoamerica, Southern Africa and South-east Asia. JASS is dedicated to strengthening and mobilising women's voice, visibility and collective organising power to change the norms, institutions and policies that perpetuate inequality and violence, in order to create a just, sustainable world for all. JASS generates knowledge from experience, with the intention of improving the theory and practice of women's rights, development and democracy.

	JASS ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IS SHAPED BY THESE CORE VALUES:	OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES THAT TRANSLATE THE CORE VALUES INTO PRACTICE:
1	That JASS exists to serve its mission (movement building for the empowerment of marginalised, excluded, oppressed, exploited women) with *integrity, commitment and excellence*. (Putting the mission above ourselves)	JASS policies, practices, roles and responsibilities will be derived from, accountable to and geared towards fulfilling the mission; while all efforts will be made to provide the best benefits and employment conditions for our staff, this will be balanced with resource availability and the priorities of the mission.

3 Developed from staff and board inputs by Valerie Miller & Srilatha Batliwala on 6/18/10, and used with the kind permission of JASS Board and Executive Director Lisa Veneklasen.

2	That our strength is our "ensemble" approach, with neither centre nor periphery; that encourages creativity, improvisation and risk-taking, and works through co-leadership, collaboration, reciprocity and synergy. (Why we're "jazz"!!)	Roles and responsibilities will be designed and periodically/appropriately modified in response to the changing nature of the contexts and organisational needs. These will be guided by emerging synergies (of contexts, staff capacities, opportunities, resources), and the need to maximise impact/effectiveness – this demands maximum communication.
3	That our environment is open, safe, enabling and affirming, based on teamwork that values the diversity and differences among all members of its teams, copes with creative chaos, but with boundaries determined by accountability to the mission. (Quality of organisational environment)	We will invest in staff and team development processes and organisational monitoring mechanisms that foster this environment and alert us to any lapses or challenges. We expect all entrants to the JASS community to safeguard and promote this environment.
4	A challenging and exhilarating working and learning environment that in turn demands initiative, problem-solving, critical thinking, curiosity, generosity of spirit, efficiency, flexibility, professionalism and commitment to excellence. (Quality of our work)	We will invest in staff and team development processes and organisational monitoring mechanisms that foster these norms. We expect all entrants to the JASS community to safeguard and promote these standards.
5	Transparency and openness.	Organisational policies, hierarchy of roles and responsibilities and decision-making systems will be transparent and communicated to all. Given our deliberate diversity, we assume there will be conflict and on occasions, we will have to surface issues of power and privilege. Open and accessible methods for dealing with and learning from conflict will be fostered.

6	Frugality and the most accountable use of the resources we mobilise for the fulfilment of our mission. (Financial accountability)	Financial policies, management practices, rules and norms that ensure careful and efficient use of resources.
7	Be a genuinely reflexive learning organisation that values multiple sources and ways of creating knowledge. (Accountability to mission and supporters)	We will undertake rigorous monitoring and evaluation of our work to harvest and share our lessons, insights and questions, alert us to challenges and gaps. We will generate high-quality intellectual and strategic products for a wide range of audiences. We will work to surface diverse forms of women's knowledge, return these to women in new forms, as well as deploy these in ways that influence mainstream discourses.

JASS went a step further and distilled the above 7 into 5 core organisational principles:

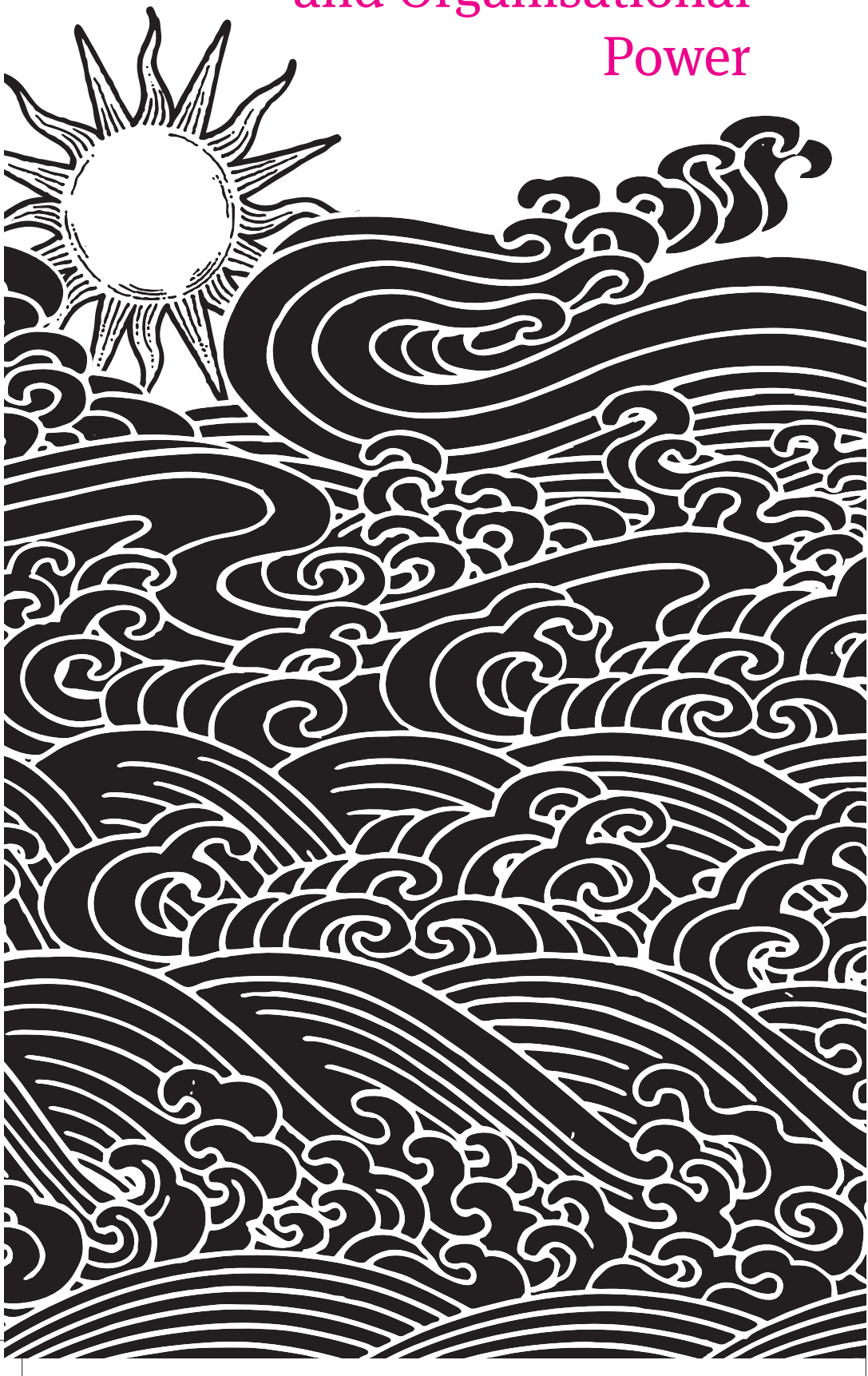
- We place our shared **sense of purpose** above all else and are deeply committed to realising our goals with integrity and excellence.
- We are a team that takes a 'weaving' and 'ensemble' approach to our strategies and challenges and to this end, we are committed to protecting an open, safe environment that values diversity and difference.
- We are committed to learning and value curiosity, creativity, generosity, critical debate, multiple perspectives and different ways of creating knowledge.
- We believe in adequate, minimal systems and structures that promote clarity, transparency and agility, while supporting the efficient and effective implementation of our goals.
- We will stay informed and in tune with the women and contexts defining our work and seek a balance between our sustained programmes and the responsibility to follow through with plans and the need to remain responsive, mobilising support and solidarity when circumstances demand.

There are plenty of other examples of how feminist organisations have attempted to close the gap between values and practices. For instance, one feminist organisation put the '360°' performance assessment system into practice because they believe in the value of accountability of each level of functionary to others as well as to the larger constituency they serve. This meant that once a year, each person, including the Director, was evaluated by not just their superiors in the hierarchy, but also by their subordinates and peers. Another organisation put into place a system where each field worker had to apply for permission to take leave from the village-level women's collectives they worked with, rather than their supervisor. Look for some more examples and see if any of them can be applied in your organisational context. Add these ideas for creating greater harmony between values and practices into the action checklist/matrix provided earlier in this module.

Congratulations! You now have a set of clearly articulated organisational values and mechanisms for their implementation, as well as a clear timeline for putting them into practice! Completing this module has moved you and your organisation closer to embodying feminist leadership for social transformation.

MODULE 4

Working on Personal and Organisational Power



Working on Personal and Organisational Power

In the previous modules, we worked on clarifying and framing our values and principles, on identifying the gaps between principles and practices and creating a checklist or action plan for how we could bring these into greater harmony. We also articulated the politics and purpose (vision and mission) within which our values are embedded. But most often, it is power and the use and abuse of power that derails our purpose, principles and practices. It is the most potent 'P' of all, the most powerful part of the diamond, because it has the capacity to distort or influence all the other 'Ps'.

Before beginning the exercises in this module, it is vital that you read pages 33-45 of the Feminist Leadership concept paper which contains a very detailed and clear explanation of the role of power in leadership and organisations and why understanding and analysing power is critical to building good feminist leadership.

A truly feminist organisation – and real feminist leadership—will always acknowledge and grapple with power openly, rather than pretending that it does not exist or that it is equally distributed in the organisation. But we must be aware that dealing with the internal power dynamics can be frightening and can disturb the equilibrium of an organisation. However, when the big 'P' is left unaddressed or ignored, it can destabilise all the good work we may have done on our principles, purpose and practices. Moreover, we cannot work on transforming power relations and structures in the outside world—especially gender power—while ignoring it in our own organisational context. So the goal of this final module is to help us analyse and address the issues of power in our organisations and in ourselves. This module has exercises that will help achieve three specific objectives:

1. To help us understand our own individual and unique history and relationship with power—our own and that of others;
2. To analyse how power operates in our organisation at the visible, hidden and invisible levels; and
3. To create a plan for addressing those forms of hidden and invisible power that impact the organisation's culture and environment negatively.

This module cannot be completed in a day or even a week. We recommend that only one exercise be undertaken on a given day and that a gap of at least a week, possibly more, be given before embarking on the next one. This is to ensure that the emotions and consequences of each exercise can be fully absorbed and processed before moving to the next one. Overall, we think you should allow for a period of up to six weeks in which to complete all the exercises in this module. Finally, since the explorations of power churn up a lot of feelings, both positive and negative, we strongly recommend that you ***begin and end*** each exercise with at least ten minutes on one of the 'SELF-ing' practices from Module 1—breathing, finger-holding, Tai-chi, etc.—to make sure that everyone is calm, open, and centred.

Some Important Definitions

Since this module works on various complex dimensions of power, it is important to be clear about some of the core concepts that are central to our work on power:

The three realms in which power operates[1]**: the public** (where it is visible, such as the power of the government, military, police, judiciary, corporations, etc.), **the private** (within institutions such as the family, clan, ethnic group, or in marriage, friendships and other relationships) and **the intimate** (the power or powerlessness that we feel within ourselves, expressed usually in terms of self-confidence, self-esteem, control over our bodies, etc.).

The 'three faces' or forms of power are **visible power**, **hidden power** and **invisible power**[2] - which are also sometimes described as direct, indirect, and agenda-setting power [3, 4, 5].

Visible or direct power operates in both public and private realms and determines who participates and who is excluded from decision-making; how privileges, tasks and opportunities are allocated and who has the authority to control resources, people or access to knowledge and information. Decisions, for instance, could include issues such as what a country's development priorities should be, how the village council's budget will be spent or who in the family can go to school and who cannot. Visible/direct power is held by political leaders (elected or not!), the police, the military and the judiciary; it is also held by the heads of multinational corporations, of clans and tribes, of social movement organisations such as trade unions or in the leadership of NGOs and women's organisations. In the private realm, it is held by heads of households and informal social groups such as clans, most of whom are men.

---

1 Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, (co-editors, Debbie Budlender and Cindy Clark), 2002, A New Weave of Power and Politics – An Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Oklahoma City, World Neighbors, p. 51.

2 Veneklasen with Miller, 2002, *op.cit*., p. 46 - 48.

3 Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, London, MacMillan, 1974, and second edition, Palgrave, 2005.

4 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, part I*, London, Allen Lane.

5 John Gaventa and Andrea Cornwall (2001). "Power and Knowledge," in Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2001) (Eds), Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (Eds) Handbook of Action Research – Participative Inquiry and Practice, London, California and New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001 above, pp. 70-80.

Hidden power (indirect power) is all about who influences or sets the agenda behind the scenes without any overt or official authority to do so and determines which issues can be addressed, whose voices are heard or who is consulted on a particular issue. Again, hidden or agenda-setting power operates in both the private and public realms. In the public realm, for instance, we see hidden power operate when private companies influence government decisions in their favour, to enhance their profits or to obtain control over public resources such as forests, land or minerals. Within families also, we see how 'good women'—those who dutifully carry out the patriarchal agenda and protect male privilege—often enjoy behind-the-scenes power to influence male decision-makers, without any formal authority.

Invisible power (agenda-setting power) is in many ways the most insidious and problematic of all to challenge and confront, because we rarely see it operating on us, yet it has the capacity to shape people's self-image, self-esteem, social attitudes and biases, without playing any apparent role in doing so. The media and marketing/advertising industries are classic purveyors of such invisible power. The media exercises invisible power by constantly making choices about which issues to highlight, i.e. what is 'news' and what is not and by constructing new norms. The daily television news, for instance, instils in us a sense of what the most important issues of the day are, but what they ignore and don't cover in the news is also important. Similarly, the advertising industry exercises invisible power by creating new norms about what is good, desirable and positive or bad, regressive and negative. The almost universal desire for fairer skin and thin bodies among women, for instance, which in turn affects their sense of self-worth, is testimony to the invisible power of these forces.

One form of hidden or invisible power is **Power Under**. Power under emerges from powerless rage, which unleashes both the destructive power of sabotage and subversion that is often unconsciously used by those who have experienced severe oppression or trauma, as well as the constructive power for building movements to confront and overcome injustice[6].

6 Steven Wineman, 2003, "Power-Under: Trauma and Nonviolent Social Change", Cambridge, MA., downloadable from www.TraumaandNonviolence.com , p. 47 - 118.

Internally, survivors of trauma and violence find it difficult to transit from being objects/victims of oppression to subjects and agents of change; they are unable to hold and exercise power non-oppressively.

Organisations: At the simplest level, an organisation is defined as a group of people joining together intentionally and creating a structure to accomplish a common set of goals. Management theory defines organisation as "A social unit of people, systematically structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals on a continuing basis. All organisations have a...structure that determines relationships between functions and positions, and...delegates roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out defined tasks. Organisations are open systems in that they affect and are affected by the environment beyond their boundaries."

This last point is crucial. It means that organisations—including social change organisations—are NOT entirely rational entities founded and functioning on the basis of logical, equitable and efficient principles. Organisations are created by people and so they are inevitably microcosms of the larger society that reflect and reproduce dominant hierarchies, biases, exclusions and stereotypes; e.g. power imbalances or discrimination on the basis of gender, racial, ethnic or sexual identity biases. At the same time, social change organisations are also sites from which power relations are being challenged and transformed, which is why it is critical for transformative leaders to unearth and address what is called the 'Deep Structure' of organisations.

Deep culture or deep structure: These are the hidden sites and processes of power and influence in an organisation that construct its actual culture. It includes the informal or unstated values and systems of reward and recognition, all of which have an enormous impact on how people and the organisation actually function. Throughout this module, we will refer to this as 'deep culture' rather than 'deep structure', to make it easier to understand and recognise. Deep cultures are, in a sense, like the elephant in the room—we all know they are there, but we do not know how to name them and tackle them.

Deep culture is not a physical site or location. It is a relational space, or rather multiple relational spaces, where hidden and

invisible power is located and operates from, and where biases and discriminatory practices are reproduced in subtle and invisible ways. It is also where we find our 'shadow'—the other organisation that no one ever acknowledges openly, but which is as real as the one that everyone can see. A good example of this is the organisation dedicated to peace-building that is internally full of conflict and where people are very poor at relating to each other in truly peaceful ways.

Indeed, the deep culture is often not so much a space or location as it is an atmosphere, or a set of unspoken codes, taken-for-granted norms and unnamed behaviours; and these invisible but very real codes, norms and behaviours often make painful or harmful interactions, and abuses of power seem 'normal' and 'natural', even healthy! For example, making fun of people's style of dress or accent just because it is different from that of others or telling someone off, even if it is painful for that person and violates their dignity, is touted as a 'healthy' venting of feelings. Even worse, this behaviour so taken for granted that it is not even noticed. Therefore the cleaning work in the organisation is always done by members of staff from certain class or class backgrounds; or only heterosexual women get elected to formal leadership positions; or in mixed organisations, only women are given charge of food and hospitality at meetings.

In fact, some of these behaviours and practices are manifestations of **Power Under—**the destructive form of power that many of us use. Power under is usually wielded or most evident in the deep culture. While deep cultures have been examined in detail in the feminist leadership document, in brief, deep cultures typically comprise:

- informal groups, cliques and other informal formations that exercise power and influence over formal structure and decision-making
- invisible/informal decision-making processes that influence/lead to formal organisational decisions; or the formal values of the organisation are not being lived out in its daily working
- how different work and roles are valued and measured
- practices that build or damage people's credibility, reputation, etc. (gossip, back-biting, rumours, smear campaigns, etc.)

Exercise 1.a (2.5 to 3 HOURS)

Personal History with Power

This exercise will help us understand some of the ways in which our relationship with power has been shaped by early experiences of it.

1. Sit in a quiet place by yourself and have a piece of paper handy to note down your reflections and insights. Give yourself about half an hour to do this part of the exercise.

2. Try to remember the first time that you became aware of ***power between people***—that some people have more power than others. Try to recall what specifically made you aware of the power dynamic in the interaction. It could be an experience of:

   a. power over (where someone is directly controlling or determining the actions, behaviour or opportunities of others) or

   b. indirect or hidden power (where someone is influencing other people's actions, behaviour or opportunities, without giving any direct orders) or

   c. invisible power (where someone or some institution is influencing our behaviour, norms or beliefs without our even being aware of this).

3. Try to remember an experience when you felt ***powerless***—what was happening? Who was in control? Why did you feel powerless? How did you feel in your body? What did you do/how did you react?

4. Now, try to recall the first time you became aware of ***your own power***—was it power over or indirect or hidden, invisible or even power under? Try to recall what specifically made you aware of your power in the interaction.

5. Analysing these various personal experiences with power, which of the following positions have you occupied in social power equations? (select as many as apply). Which position have you found yourself in most often?

   a. ***Subjected*** – when you were the subject of control (someone exercising power or authority over you) – how did you FEEL?

   b. ***Equivalence*** – when you were working together with others, exercising joint authority or control – how did you FEEL?

   c. **Control** – when you (individually or with some others) were exercising power over others – how did you FEEL?

d. ***Other*** – a power equation other than the above; please explain specifically where you were positioned in the equation vis-à-vis others and describe how you FELT?

6. From among these various power positions, try to reflect honestly which position you are ***most comfortable with***/in? In which do you feel you best know: what to do, what is expected of you and how to function and manage the situation well?

7. Now record your insights in writing. If possible, use the 'Freewriting' technique described in Appendix (p. 128-129) to capture the insights that come from deep within, about your relationship to power—your own and that of others.

Exercise 1.b (1.5 to 2 HOURS)

Assessing your psychological position

1. Do the 'I'm Okay, You're Okay' exercise provided in Appendix (p. 122-125)
2. After you have diagnosed your primary psychological positions, examine how your personal history with power may have influenced the positions you occupy and how your positions are influencing/affecting your interactions with others, especially if you are in a formal leadership position or exercise authority over others.
3. Now, with this deepened understanding of yourself, move into small groups of five to six people and together tackle the following questions:
   a. How do you think your personal history with power and your positioning of yourself (in terms of the 'I'm Okay You're Okay' boxes) influences **the way you practice leadership (if you are playing a leadership role)** or influence how you respond/react to the way **others practice leadership**?
   b. How do these different responses/reactions affect the larger mission and environment of the organisation? In the small group, make a list of the positives and negatives that emerge.
   c. How can some of the negative impacts be dealt with constructively, so that we can release our full leadership potential, whether we are in formal leadership positions or not?
   d. Among the strategies we identify in step c), above, there will be some that we need to work on at our own individual level, and others that need to be supported or addressed by the organisation. Separate these into two different lists.

Power issues that each of us must deal with ourselves:	Power issues that need to be dealt with/supported by the organisation:

4. Using the list of issues that need organisational support or approaches, identify some concrete ***organisational strategies*** for overcoming leadership constraints arising from personal histories. This may include coaching/mentoring, creating special safe spaces for dealing with negative dynamics/conflicts that emerge, transparent mechanisms challenging abuses of power, etc. You may also want to explore mechanisms such as 360-degree performance assessment[7], the Johari windows[8], grievance and conflict-resolution mechanisms that include those in leadership, organisationally-sponsored individual and group counselling, etc.

5. Now, come together in the big group and create a unified list of strategies for overcoming leadership constraints arising from personal histories. Discuss what kinds of resources these strategies will need. If some of them require financial resources, explore whether the organisation can afford them. Finalise the list with all these factors accounted for, create a timeline for their implementation and assign responsibilities to particular individuals or committees for overseeing their implementation. Use the matrix below as a guide for doing this:

What is the strategy required?	What are the internal resources required for it?	What are the external resources required for it?	Who will be responsible for its implementa-tion?	When will each strategy be launched?

7 For more information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/360-degree_feedback.

8 For more information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johari_window.

Exercise 2 (2.5 to 3 HOURS)

Mapping visible/direct power in the organisation

1) Individually, in small groups, or all sitting down together, map the sites and dynamics of ***visible power*** in your organisation, by asking and answering the following questions:

   a) **Who does what?** How are tasks and roles divided across the organisation, and does that reveal any patterns? For instance, are the roles with the most authority occupied by older/'senior' women; or those who are the leader's oldest colleagues and friends; or who joined the organisation at a particular time...?

   b) **Who gets what?** Who has the most control and decision-making power over the organisation's resources and who has the least? In thinking about the control of resources, remember that resources can be both tangible (such as funds and staff) or intangible (such as contacts, networks, influence, access to information, etc.). Map the control and decision-making power over all these kinds of resources.

   c) **Who decides what?** Who has the greatest decision-making power in the organisation at various levels? Is the decision-making power linked with capacity and responsibility or is it governed by other factors? Does anybody have hidden decision-making power, i.e. are there any people who are making decisions without the official authority to do so?

2) Write down the results of your analysis or draw them in an organogram or picture.

3) Now, using the results of your analysis as the basis, discuss whether the *visible* power structure of the organisation makes sense. This will be your *diagnosis* of the visible power structure in your organisation. Based on the values and operational principles you have developed in Module 3, and the vision and mission identified in Module 2, ask and answer the following specific questions:

   a) Is there a good balance between authority and responsibility? (if 'democratic, participatory decision-making' is the principle, does the balance of authority and responsibility over decision-making reflect this?)

   b) Are there adequate opportunities for the people affected by direct power to shape the way it is exercised, i.e. do the people who are affected by decisions have a say in making them? This

can be decided based on whether you have identified this as an operating principle.

c) Are the forms of direct power, its locations/levels and the people exercising it rational for the organisation's mission and purpose? For instance, if the organisation's mission is to build a community-based movement, is sufficient power being devolved to the community leadership structures for taking decisions about strategies and resources?

d) Is power overly concentrated in some levels, roles or individuals? How can it be better distributed?

4) Based on your discussion and conclusions, write down any changes you feel are required to bring the visible/direct power structure and power relations into better harmony with its values and purpose. For each change, discuss HOW it can be brought about, and WHO will be involved in making and enabling the change. Use the matrix provided at the end of the module to develop your action plan.

This completes your mapping of who exercises visible and direct power in your organisation. You may also like to use the exercises provided in 'Power – A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change'[9] available at http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/all-publications.

Exercise 3.a

(PART ONE, 3-4 HOURS OR HALF A DAY)

Mapping Organisational Deep Culture

There are very few tried and tested methodologies for unpacking or dealing with deep culture issues. We are not in a position to prescribe solutions or remedies for more deep-rooted issues that may be present because of deep trauma, oppression and the kind of distortions they create in organisational functioning. Many of the techniques for addressing them require high levels of professional training in organisational theory, psychology and other disciplines. It is unlikely that most feminist organisations or feminist leaders would have access to such skilled professionals to help them unearth and deal with the deep culture of their organisations. We would like to stress that the following exercises are not a substitute for such skilled intervention, but a simple, layperson's approach to addressing some of the less complex deep culture issues. Keeping these cautions and facts in mind, let us move into the first part of the deep culture exercises:

1. Form small groups of four to five people. Sit together in a quiet place with a large piece of paper on which to draw your map.

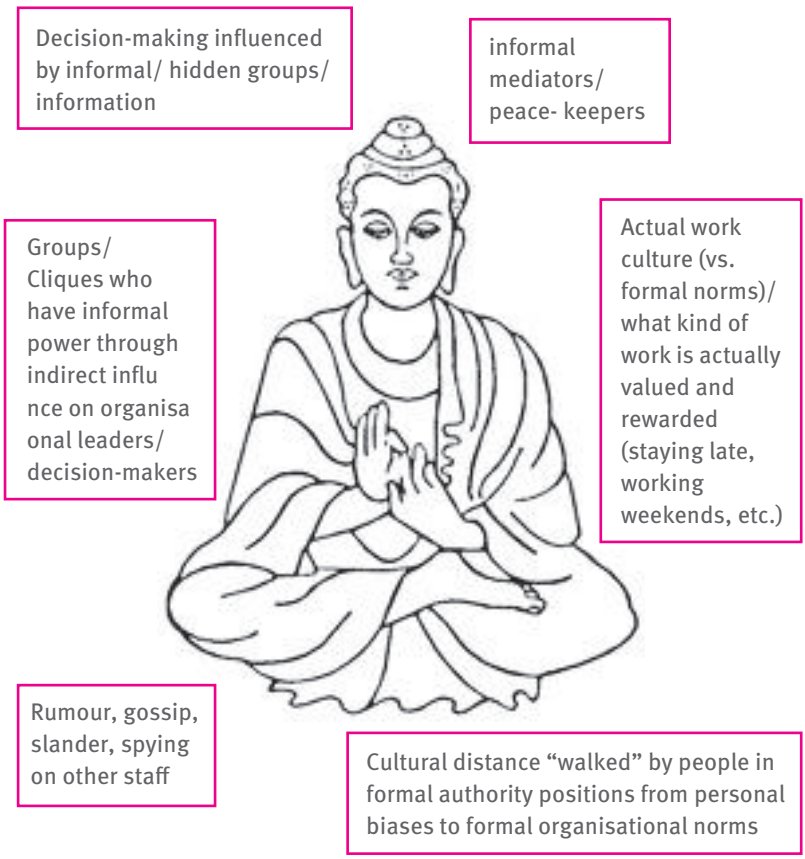
2. Use the figure on the next page as a guide or template. Look at the examples in the different blurbs, and add any others that you may believe are important in your organisational context. Try to map some of the deep culture dynamics/processes—both positive and negative—that may be present in your organisation. These could include:

   a) Informal groups/cliques/gangs that have informal power or indirect influence on decision-making in the organisation (e.g., they may be able to influence the director's thinking);

   b) Informal/invisible decision-making processes that lead to or impact formal decisions, for instance, the director of the organisation may meet some of the team members privately (at their home or in a restaurant or a club), discuss organisational issues, get information about other staff and reach certain conclusions that then influence formal decisions.

   c) Do you know of any similar processes that have occurred in your organisation? Describe and record them as examples on your Deep Culture 'map'.

ELEMENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL "DEEP CULTURE"



d) The following are some aspects of deep culture that you could try to examine in your organisational context:

d.i) Try to analyse the actual work culture/informal norms operating in the organisation and how these vary from the formal or stated rules or norms. Also look at how this impacts different people in the organisation. Some examples of this could be:

- the organisation's official working hours are nine to five, Monday to Friday, but in practice, only those who stay late, work on weekends, etc. are valued and praised in the organisation; those who work the official hours are considered 'lazy' or 'uncommitted'.
- Certain kinds of behaviour are informally rewarded and empowered. Therefore, a sycophantic assistant to the director who spies and reports on other team members and who practices uncritical and slavish personal loyalty, is often highly valued and rewarded either officially

through promotions and pay raises or with growing informal power over organisational decision-making, while a more critical staff member, who is loyal to the organisation but not to the individual director or 'boss' may at best be given little voice or influence in the organisation and at worst be considered a 'trouble-maker'.

d.ii) Rumour, gossip, slander, informal policing of/spying on other staff are all part of organisational deep culture. These are also processes through which 'power under' is exercised, and through which formal hierarchies, authority structures and decision-making systems are subverted. For example, people with formal power who are resented by others are often brought down through the use of character assassination, gossip and backbiting.

d.iii) However, not all dynamics in the deep culture of organisations are negative. Some positive forces also operate in this space and gain informal power. A good example is the presence of people who are respected by all, not because of their formal position but due to their personalities, moral uprightness, fairness and maturity. These people often play positive roles in mediating and resolving disputes and giving a sympathetic ear or objective advice. These processes of mediation and resolution of tensions are also part of deep cultures and need to be mapped and understood.

e) Return to the large group and share your maps of the deep culture by simple reporting of the findings of each group. Do not allow any discussion, but only clarificatory questions. This is because allowing any discussion when emotions are running high, and people are feeling hurt, angry or defensive (because they feel fingers are being pointed at them), could easily lead to fights, accusations and counter-accusations, which will not be productive or constructive. In fact, ensure that people understand from the outset that the sharing of deep culture maps is simply to listen and absorb, not to react or debate. The opportunity for debate will come later, in the next exercise. The interval of several days between the two exercises will help people work with their emotions and calm down.

f) If none of your groups are able to identify many deep culture dynamics in your organisation, but the majority of you feel that the organisational atmosphere is unhealthy, closed, opaque and unhappy, it could be because the organisational climate

is such that these issues cannot be brought into the open. In other words, the power dynamics are very deeply hidden or they have become so 'normalised' that you cannot identify or name them; they have become a part of you. You will then need to bring in a more skilled and trained facilitator and undertake processes that are too complex to be covered in this toolkit.

g) On the other hand, if none of your groups are able to identify any deep culture dynamics, but the majority of you feel the organisational atmosphere is healthy, open, transparent and happy and most of you really like working here, then you are lucky. Your organisation is in good feminist health! It is also possibly being led by a sound feminist leader or leaders who have taken care to create open, transparent and accountable organisational processes that prevent the build-up of a negative deep culture. If this is the case, stand up for a moment and cheer!!

h) Since mapping deep culture can bring up a lot of tensions and negative emotions, do one of the exercises given in Appendix to help the group as well as each individual release these emotions and come back to some kind of equilibrium. Try fingerholding, 'roaring like a lion', a Tai Chi exercise or some deep breathing and visualisation.

Exercise 3.b (PART TWO, 2.5-3 HOURS)

Analysing Hidden and Invisible Power

Begin with a strong 'SELF-ing' exercise from Appendix to bring positive, constructive energy to this next exercise. Sit together in the large group. The facilitator will put up and summarise the deep culture maps of the various small groups developed in the previous exercise. Now, with these 'maps' as the backdrop, go through the following steps:

1. Identify all the forms of *hidden and invisible power* that are operating in the organisation, i.e. all the ways in which indirect power is being exercised and the organisational culture and norms are being invisibly shaped. More specifically,
    a. Give each individual an opportunity to think about how they are being personally affected by these dynamics or how they may have unwittingly participated in setting them up.
    b. Ask each individual to think about (but not speak aloud or 'confess') how these dynamics may have empowered or benefitted them?
    c. How have they disempowered them?
    d. Allow about fifteen to twenty minutes for this individual reflection.
2. Bringing everyone back to the large group process, identify all those dynamics that contradict or violate the principles—especially the operating principles—of the organisation and the values it claims to stand for, and how they contribute to an unhealthy environment in the organisation.
3. From among these dynamics, prioritise two or three processes/practices/behaviours that you believe are causing the greatest damage to the organisation and are most contradictory to the organisation's purpose and principles. This could be because they are reducing staff morale and motivation, consuming a lot of time and energy, creating a lot of tension and dissatisfaction and therefore affecting the organisation's larger mission and work. You can do this by asking each person to 'vote' for the top three pressing issues that need to be addressed immediately.

Exercise 3.c

(PART THREE, 3-4 HOURS OR HALF A DAY)

Dealing Constructively with 'Deep Culture'/ Hidden and Invisible Power

If you wish and if the group has the energy, you could move directly into this exercise after completing exercise 3.b. This decision should be taken either by the facilitator or the group, based on the emotional temperature of the group and their energy level.

1) Starting with the priority issues of deep culture and hidden/ invisible power around which the consensus emerged in the previous session, form small groups of five to six people. Give each group an hour to go through the following steps.

2) Ask each small group to brainstorm on strategies/mechanisms/ policies/daily practices/rituals and any other innovative methods that would help remove these processes from the deep culture or bring them up to the surface. Also discuss how the organisation's formal, visible systems could be strengthened to deal with and minimise these deep culture problems.

3) While formal policies and mechanisms cannot completely remove deep cultures or solve all deep culture problems, they can reduce their depth and destructive power. They can also transform hidden or invisible power dynamics into more transparent processes. For example,

   i. creating a formal conflict resolution/grievance redressal system headed by a respected external person would enable people affected by the informal work culture or rumour-mongering to seek remedy; or

   ii. an organisational development intervention with an external OD facilitator to help bring destructive deep culture dynamics to light and force the organisation to deal with them more squarely; or

   iii. creating new formal policies on conflict of interest or harassment; or

   iv. instituting a 360-degree performance assessment system that would enable giving feedback to people at all locations in the hierarchy backed with policies that compel non-performers or 'deep culture rats' to be held accountable!

4) Once the small groups have completed their task, return to the large group and discuss the various options for addressing the deep culture/hidden power issues.

5) Work toward a consensus on the strategies you would like to try for each deep culture issue.

6) Use the same matrix provided on page 70, Module 3, to prepare your action plan on shifting organisational power.

Remember that most of the solutions we come up in this exercise will be experimental. They have to be tried and tested, and new solutions may have to be developed if they don't solve the problem. There is little experience with dealing with deep culture issues, and no 'perfect' solutions. The important thing is to try, even if we don't immediately succeed. So keep other strategies that don't make it into the first list in reserve, to try them later if necessary.

Congratulations! You have now done something very few organisations have ever done: you have created a strategy to deal with hidden and invisible power!

Choose an exercise from Appendix to help you conclude and close the exercise with positive energy.

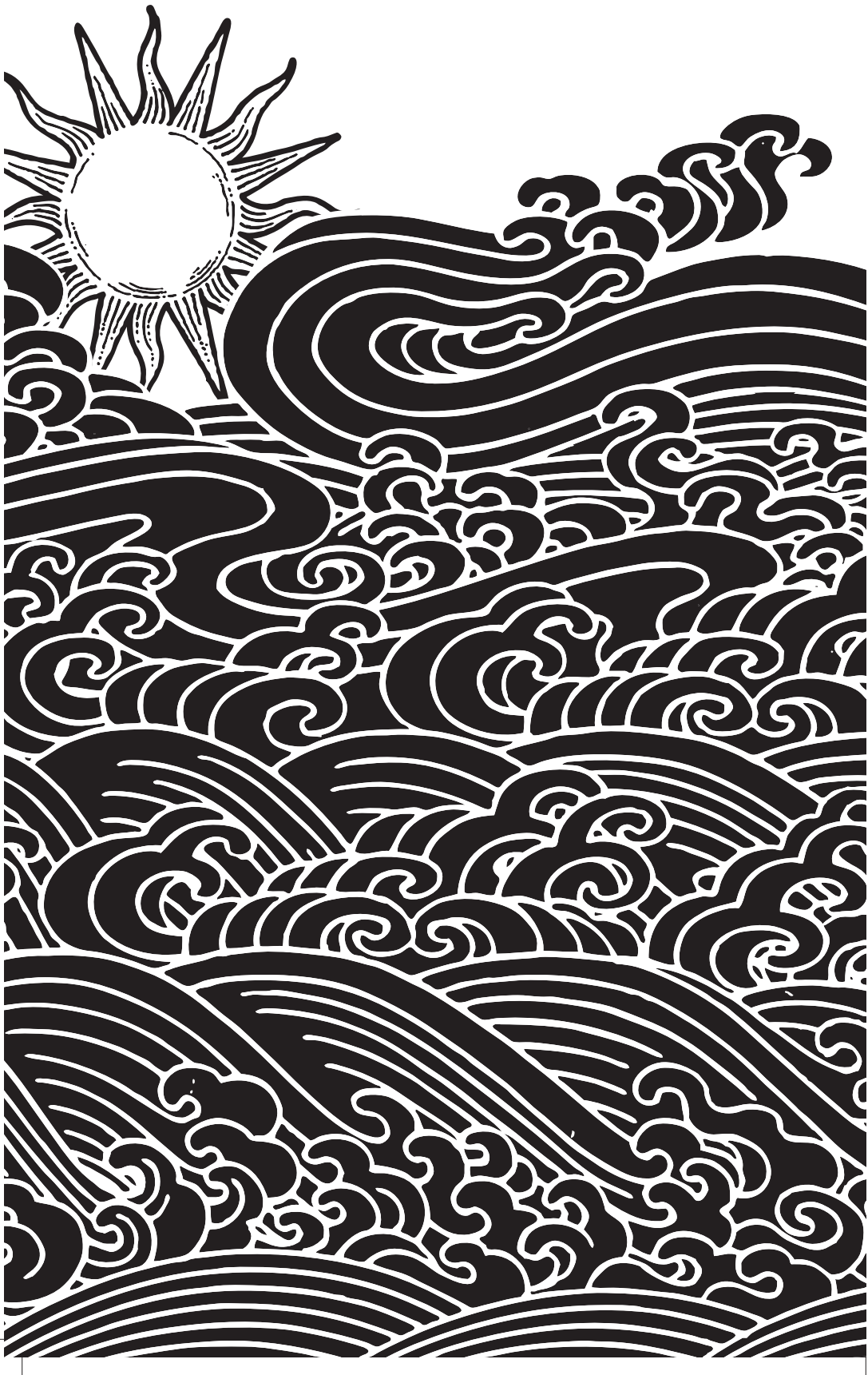
* * * * *

Celebrate when you complete this module!

You have now done an extensive power analysis of your organisation, and diagnosed how to bring these power relations closer to a truly feminist vision consistent with the highest standards of feminist leadership for social transformation. You have begun the journey of transforming your organisation to shadow or mirror, its larger goal of social change, to help it 'become the change' it seeks in the world outside!

Appendix

Mind-body-spirit practices with detailed instructions



	PRACTICES	PAGES
1.	BREATHWORK	98
	Abdominal breathing	98
	Breathing in Nature	99
	Big Hug	100
2.	FINGERHOLDS	102
3.	EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUES	107
4.	TAI CHI	112
5.	EXERCISES TO HELP RELEASE ANGER AND BUILD INNER POWER	120
6.	SELF-AWARENESS EXERCISES	122
	I'm okay you're okay – Assessing your psychological position	122
	Exercise for developing self-awareness on how we all contribute to conflicts	126
7.	WRITING TOOLS TO HELP WITH SELF REFLECTION	128
	REFFERENCES	130

1. BREATHWORK

OBJECTIVE

Breathing consciously can help us get more grounded or centred and can help us let go of strong or difficult emotions we are holding on to. It can also help us recover from a state of shock.

Breath is the source of life, the basic expression of life energy. After all, our first breath marks the beginning and our last breath, the end of our life. Each breath brings fresh energy into the tissues and cells to nourish body, mind and spirit and impacts us emotionally as well as mentally. When we breathe out, accumulated stress, stagnant or blocked energy and toxins are released. When we breathe in, we receive an abundance of fresh purified energy. At times of stress, breathing is an effective way to let go of the tension that has accumulated in the body. A few long deep breaths at a difficult moment can completely change the way we handle a situation. Our breathing patterns shift when different emotions arise. Therefore, by changing the way we breathe we can change our emotional and physical states. Quite often, when we are in shock or traumatised, we hold our breath. By becoming conscious of this and breathing more deeply, we can have immediate change in the way we feel. Breathwork combined with images of light or nature can help us focus and promote feelings of peace and calm. Given below are some breathing exercises that you can use in your daily life to unblock, move, balance and increase your energy. Useful side-effects of these exercises are that they can help you to calm, energise or centre yourself.

Abdominal breathing[1]

INSTRUCTIONS

Sit comfortably, supported and close your eyes. Breathe deeply and centre yourself, letting go of all worries and thoughts. Place your hands on your abdomen, breathe in deeply through your nose and imagine the air moving down through the body into your centre within your abdomen. Imagine that your abdomen fills with air as if it were a balloon. Hold your breath for a few moments and then exhale slowly through your mouth, contracting the muscles of your abdomen, letting go of all the tension in your body.

1 See www.Capacitar.org and Cane (2000) p. 27, Trauma, Healing and Transformation. Awakening a New Heart with Body, Mind, Spirit Practices, Capacitar inc., California..

Continue abdominal breathing for several minutes. If any thoughts come into your mind, gently release them, returning to the image of the air moving in and out of your body.

Abdominal breathing is very helpful for:

- Changing the way we breathe, i.e. from shallow and rapid breathing to a more deep breathing.
- Helping to change our emotional and physical states.
- Letting go of worries and thoughts and to get a sense of getting more 'air' into the body and lightening it up.
- Digestion at all levels—thoughts, information and difficult emotions.
- Letting go of envy, comparing oneself to others.
- Being stuck in the mind.

Breathing in Nature[2]

INSTRUCTIONS

Nature is a great resource for healing and grounding. With both feet on the ground, breathe in deeply, imagining that your feet are long roots running into the earth. Breathe in energy from the earth and breathe out the stress, tension and pain. Breathe in the earth energy through imaginary roots in the centre of the soles of your feet to the count of seven. Hold your breath for a count of three and then breathe out slowly to a count of seven, consciously releasing any tension or stress you are holding onto anywhere in your body. As you continue to breathe this way, imagine that you are filling your whole being with vital life force.

Breathing in nature is especially helpful when:

- We feel unbalanced and ungrounded.
- We are going through some kind of traumatic stress.
- At the beginning of a meeting when you have less time, to help everyone centre and become present.

---

2 See www.Capacitar.org and Cane (2000) p. 30, Trauma, Healing and Transformation. Awakening A New Heart with Body, Mind, Spirit Practices, Capacitar inc., California.

- At the end of a meeting, to let go of anything that stressed or bothered you or simply to refresh yourselves.
- When working with someone who has been traumatised, as in a counselling situation.

Big Hug[3]

Many of us engaged in feminist social change work feel alone and unloved, unappreciated at some deep level, though we may not realise this consciously. We seek an expression of love and validation for what we have chosen to do but often there is no one to provide it. Hugging oneself is a great way to show love and appreciation to oneself and also to heal.

INSTRUCTIONS

Cross your arms and place your thumbs under your collar-bones—so the left thumb is under the right collar bone and vice-versa as shown in Figure 1.a. Let the rest of your fingers rest gently on the edge of your shoulder blades. Drop your shoulders, smile, bring your attention to your breathing and give your best friend a hug, as in Figure 1.b. Honour her by letting go of everything that has come before this breath, so you can be open to receiving a new breath of life. Imagine that all the stress and tension that you are holding in any part of your body can leave your body through your toes. Now you are open to a new breath of life.

Figure 1.a

Figure 1.b

3 From Jin Shin JyutsuÓ – see Mary Burmeister 1985a, p. 41.

The Big Hug helps to bring vital life force to your entire being, thus creating a harmony within you. It is helpful:

- Whenever you feel very stressed or tense in your shoulders and neck or when you notice that you are not breathing very deeply, stop what you are doing and hug yourself for a few minutes, breathing deeply and reconnecting with yourself. Appreciate the unique being that you are.
- You can also use this during a meeting; to help centre the group; to remind participants that they are all human and connected to each other through the common air that they breathe. In a group you can extend the sense of self-appreciation to others by looking at each other, recognising each person's humanity, their unique gifts, talents and histories and imagine that you are hugging each other with your eyes.
- In meetings where there is a lot of confrontations and differences or that deal with difficult or tense situations or conflict mediation situations, this hold can be especially helpful. The facilitator can take the group through the exercise using appropriate language and images to help the unloading and group connectivity.
- On a more physical level, for those suffering from any kind of lung or chest ailment, this is a wonderful hold to help open the lungs.

After attending a Gender at Work workshop, Christina Mthoroane from the Kganya Consortium in Orange Farm, South Africa, a woman in her seventies, commented during the evaluation, "*I have learnt to appreciate myself and to appreciate others. That is a very good thing. The exercises, they made these four days. They made me feel young and I will always try to exercise in the morning*."

2. FINGERHOLDS

Fingerholds[4] to harmonise your whole being and to manage emotions

How does it work and why you should use it

Holding fingers is a powerful yet simple way to harmonise the whole being and to reconnect you to your core energy. Each finger is associated with pathways of energy that are connected to different aspects of the entire being as well as related emotions (Figure. 2). Emotions and feelings are like waves of energy moving through the body, mind and spirit.

With strong or overwhelming feelings, energy can become blocked or repressed, resulting in pain or congestion in the body. Holding each finger while breathing deeply can bring emotional and physical release and healing. The fingerholds are thus, a very helpful tool to use in daily life and can be used anywhere, anytime. **The practice of this instrument can help you**:

- reconnect with the qualities you are out of touch with and create a general sense of well-being for yourself
- work with core attitudes and emotions
- in difficult or challenging situations, where anger or anxiety arise, to bring peace, focus and calm so that the appropriate response or action may be taken
- relax as in meditation or with music and can be used before going to sleep to release the problems of the day and to bring deep relaxation to the body, mind and spirit
- help yourself or another person—you can hold the fingers of someone else who is angry or upset
- harmonise the negative attitudes that lie beneath difficult emotions
- support young children who are crying or having a tantrum or people who are very fearful, anxious, sick or dying

4 Fingerholds come from Jin Shin JyutsuÓ. See Mary Burmeister (1985b).

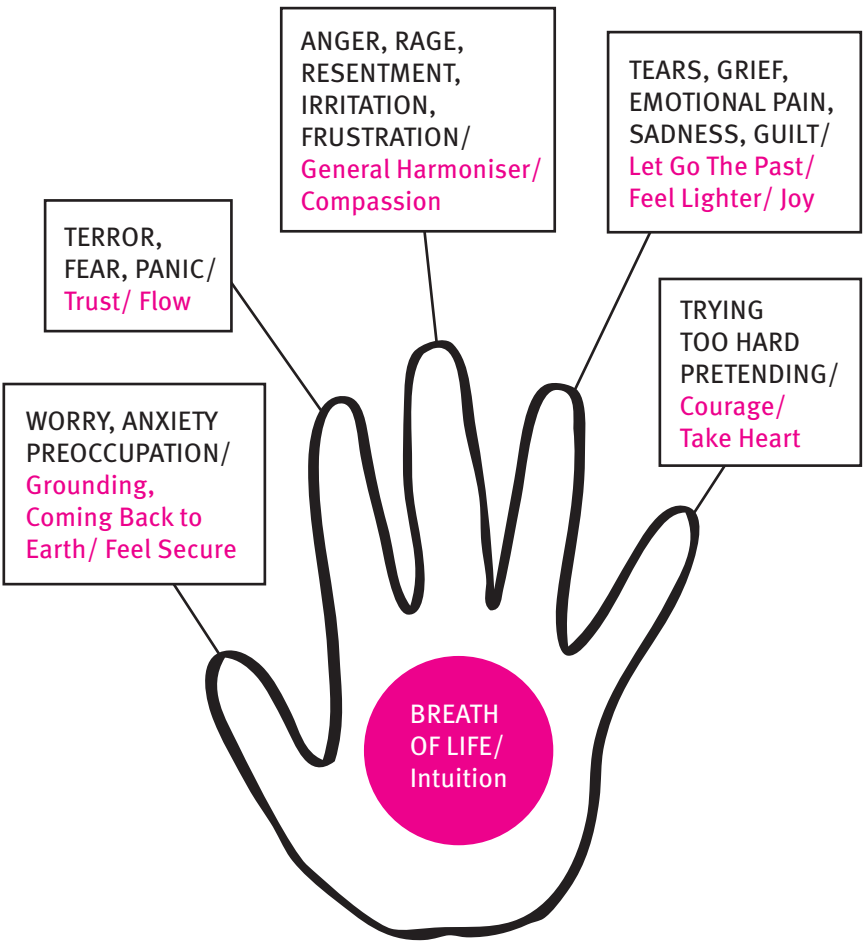


Figure 2. Pathways of energy

Fingerhold Practice[5]

INSTRUCTIONS (Please refer to Figure. 3)

- ***Hold each finger*** *with the opposite hand for two to five minutes. You can work with one/or both hands. You can also hold the centre of the palm, by folding your hands or placing them together or holding a few fingers in the centre. Focus on those fingers which feel the most like they are 'asking' for it.*
- ***Breathe in deeply****; recognise and acknowledge the strong or disturbing feelings or emotions you are holding inside yourself.*
- ***Breathe out slowly and let go****. Imagine the feelings draining out of your finger into the earth.*
- ***Breathe in a sense of harmony****, strength and healing. And breathe out slowly, releasing past feelings and problems.*

Figure 3. Fingerhold practice

5 Text adapted from Capacitar Emergency Kit p. 2 and emotional associations from Jin Shin Jyutsu©. See Mary Burmeister (1985b). Capacitar emergency Kit can be downloaded at: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.capacitar.org%2Fkits%2FEngCapEmergKit.doc&ei=8lt7UrnAIYPxhQfV0YGQBw&usg=AFQjCNG7wfhkR7s_gNJ0hFAo8suetBNcPQ&sig2=O93OYJDdfS9_1JmVoE-0YQ&bvm=bv.56146854,d.ZG4

Often as you hold each finger, you can feel a pulsing sensation as the energy and feelings move and become balanced. In group settings, spending five to ten minutes holding each finger quietly at the beginning or end of a meeting can help centre and calm the people in the group. When participants know which finger to hold when a strong attitude or emotion surfaces for them, they can quietly hold their own finger to help them become calmer.

STORIES

Vukani-Tsohang, Africa is a women's and youth project focusing on skills transfer, poverty alleviation and youth with special needs and disabilities. The project also runs weekly workshops and dialogues on domestic violence, human rights, basic services and on any other issue suggested by the community.

Thandiwe Mtimkulu, the founder of Vukani, (fondly known as Ma Thandi) (learned how to hold her fingers some years ago and has benefited so powerfully from the practice that she has nicknamed it 'finger-healing'. Here is her story:

I also benefited and managed to regain my health after I met Michel at the Gender at Work Action Learning Process. I had water retention and this was affecting my heart and the medication I was given was putting strain on my kidneys. I had deep vein thrombosis and could not walk for a minute without being breathless because my heart was ninety per cent submerged in water. I was obese and could not even lift my legs because of the water in my body. My legs were dark because there was poor circulation, my face was swollen and I had constant pain in my heart. I even wanted to stop coming to the process because of my ill health. The finger holds that Michel introduced me to, saved my life. I was so desperate that I decided to hold each finger for 10-20 minutes and meditated and prayed while I did it. As I held each finger, I could feel the sensation and movement in my body and organs (lower abdomen, kidney, bladder and heart). This sensation was vivid and it surprised me. In the beginning, this method was so intense that I had to go to the toilet regularly, as

Figure 4. Picture of Thandiwe Mtimkulu

if I've taken diuretic pills. I would sometimes do these holds while doing my feet exercises, as the physio suggested. The more I held my fingers, the more I managed to release the water, the more I felt better. My doctor was surprised about my progress but did not believe my finger story. I also managed to go 7 sizes down and now have to deal with saggy flesh because the water is draining on a daily basis.

Vukani also uses the fingers in the midst of large community meetings. If for instance, there is a lot of anger while facilitating a community dialogue, they stop the meeting and get everyone to hold their middle finger for a few minutes.

Another activist, based in India, practiced finger-holding while she was undergoing treatment for a chronic back problem. This is what she had this to say:

I found the finger-holding exercise incredible at so many levels... I still do it, all the time, in all sorts of settings and always when I am just still or lying down. I feel I have released a lot of anger, pain and anxiety through finger-holding in the last two months... I feel liberated from a lot of the negative emotions that were holding me back in the past and from the bitterness in several of my intimate relationships, like with my husband. Consequently, it's created – or should I say freed up – a lot of positive energy for anything I want to do, personally or professionally...

3. EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE - EFT[6]

The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) developed by Gary Flint, Ph.D., **is very useful for** unblocking and healing strong emotions, fears, anxiety, emotional pain, anger, traumatic memories, phobias and addictions, as well as for alleviating body symptoms and pain, such as headaches and overall body pain. The technique is based on the theory of the energy field of the body, mind and spirit, along with the meridian theory of Eastern medicine. Problems, traumas, anxiety and pain can cause a block in the energy flow of the body. Tapping or pressing acupressure points connected with channels or meridians of energy can help move blocked energy in congested areas and promote the healthy flow of energy in the body and mental field (figures 5.a and 5.b). (Adapted with permission from the EFT materials of Gary Flint, Ph.D. Emotional Freedom Technique.)

Figure 5.a Tapping the acupressure points on the face

Figure 5.b Tapping the acupressure points on the hand

6 Can be accessed from Capacitar Emergency Kit p. 3available at: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.capacitar.org%2Fkits%2FEngCapEmergKit.doc&ei=8lt7UrnAIYPxhQfV0YGQBw&usg=AFQjCNG7wfhkR7s_gNJ0hFAo8suetBNcPQ&sig2=O93OYJDdfS9_1JmVoE-0YQ&bvm=bv.56146854,d.ZG4

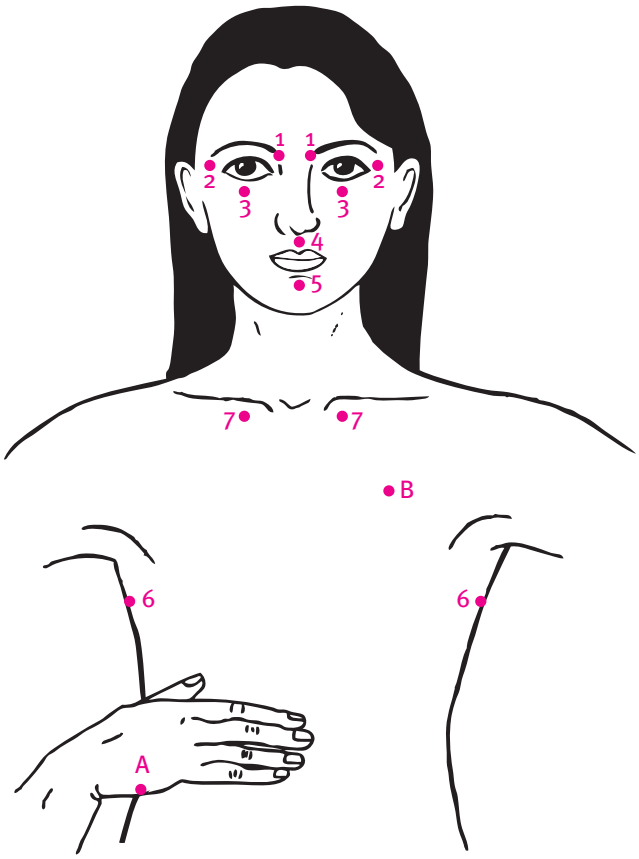


Figure 6. Acupressure points in the body

Figure 7. Sore spot on chest

EFT Practice

INSTRUCTIONS (figure 6)

1. *Think of an issue to work with and measure your anxiety level* *Choose a problem to work with—a worry, phobia, anxiety, traumatic memory or negative self-concept. Using a scale of 0-10, measure the level of anxiety that you feel when thinking about the issue. (0 means no anxiety, 10 means extremely high level of anxiety). If it is difficult to quantify or measure your anxiety with a number, use a simple scale such as (none, small, medium, large) or (big to little) or (tall to short). When you have worked out your score, focus your attention on the actual physical sensations the problem or worry is creating in your body. After you have done the tapping exercise, notice if and how this sensation has changed.*

2. *Tap the sequence of Acupressure Points 7-9 times*
   Breathe deeply and tap seven to nine times with your index and middle fingers at the following spots:

- *Point above which the eyebrows begin* 1
- *Points at the side of the eyebrows* 2
- *Points on the bone below the pupils of eyes* 3
- *Point below the nose* 4
- *Point below the lips on the chin* 5
- *Points below armpits (about 4 inches down)* 6
- *Points below clavicles on sides of sternum* 7

3. *Tap point A on side of hand*
   Tap the Polarity Reversal Point A on the side of the hand while saying three times: "In spite of the fact that I have this problem, I'm OK, I accept myself."

4. *Repeat the sequence in #2 & #3*
   Repeat sequence until your anxiety level is down to 0-2.

5. *`Rub the Sore Spot B*
   Rub or press the Sore Spot located on the left side of the chest about three inches below the left collar bone and two to three inches to the side of the sternum.(figure 7).

The EFT technique is particularly useful for

- any heightened emotional states such as states of fear, panic or difficult memories.
- helping to reduce overwhelming emotions and to help people get to a more 'neutral' stance, when discussing differences or dealing with conflict.
- a group setting, when there is a shared negative emotion in the group or when the group is having a shared reaction to something (see example below). When we are facing something difficult, it can often consume a lot of our energy. The EFT does not mean that we are avoiding a problem or pretending it is not there but it can help us put the difficulty into perspective and thereby, increase our ability to be response-able—(i.e. able to respond in a less reactive way). Feminists who are working a lot in the area of sexual abuse or domestic violence, often experience feelings of hopelessness and/or rage, as do traumatic memories. In any of these situations, the EFT is a helpful practice to utilise.
- helping to focus on the actual physical sensations that arise in your body as a result of an issue you may have chosen to work on. In other words, you are then doing the tapping process with your mind focussed on the impact on your body rather than on the issue itself. For example, I am struggling to sleep because I keep getting memories from when I was attacked. When I make up my score, I focus on my struggle to sleep rather than on my memory of the attack.

STORY

Some years ago I was facilitating a strategic planning meeting for a small organisation that was working on issues of child maintenance. Many of the staff members had themselves come from backgrounds of abusive relationships or had been abandoned by the fathers of their children. The members of staff and the Board members were supposed to be present at the meeting. For various reasons, the Board members arrived late for the meeting. Before the Board members actually arrived, I had a chance to work some more with the staff. The staff were all furious and angry but in a victim kind of way. I asked them to show me with their body language—i.e. with hands pushing them away or inviting them in—how they really felt about the Board members and how much were they really inviting them to be there. Of course, the staff immediately showed me their hands pushing away. So I was able to say – OK – so here you are very angry with this Board for being late

but in actual fact you are in your sub-text (hidden power of a strange kind) pushing them out. This helped the staff 'see' the way they were using their 'victim-power' in a very direct way. I then stopped what we were doing and immediately led them in the use of the EFT technique to 'clear' themselves before we continued. The focus was not thinking about X or Y Board member and how much they disliked them; the focus was on the tension they were holding in their shoulders, the feelings of anger that were boiling inside them and their desire to push the Board members out. Once we had completed the practice, staff members could breathe more easily and were able to confront the Board members, when they arrived, in a way that was much more constructive.

4. TAI CHI[7]

These movements are based on Tai Chi Chih, developed by Justin Stone and are used with images to express the flow of energy. **They empower us to discover and follow our own flow and awaken our body wisdom.** Regular practice reconnects us with the source of life and the universal energy of heaven and earth and can bring healing and harmony to the body, mind and spirit. Tai Chi helps to release stress and rebalance energy while helping us let go of tension, negativity and body pain. It also helps us relieve symptoms such as high blood pressure, headaches, irritation, depression and anxiety. Tai Chi is fluid, relaxed and peaceful; the feelings and senses are alert. You are present in the moment, fully focused on the movements of your body and on your breathing. Your body becomes a current that is flowing with energy, vitality, and strength. It feels as though it is a tree, with roots planted in the earth, receiving light and air from the heavens. Breathe deeply during the movements to keep the energy of the body moving. Feel the currents of energy passing through your body, opening the channels or meridians, increasing the Chi of the body. Relax during the movements and try not to think of anything except the parts of your body that are moving or your breath that is filling the Tantien, the centre of the vital energy below your navel. Focus your attention on the energy centres in the balls of your feet that the Chinese call the Bubbling Springs. Relax completely and allow your body to move freely and fully, without controlling your movements with the mind. Often, you will feel pulses or currents in your hands or in various parts of your body. Enjoy the beauty and grace of your body.

7 Adapted from Capcitar Emergency Kit page 1 (website in earlier footnote) For more information see Cane (2000) pp. 62-73.

The Movements

INSTRUCTIONS

Begin each Tai Chi movement first on the left side with your left foot forward, knees slightly bent. Your weight is balanced between both legs, allowing energy to circulate throughout the body. The centre of your abdomen is the point of balance. Breathe deeply into this centre of balance. Keep your arms relaxed and soft, moving without effort. After each movement is complete on the left side, do the same movement on the right side, placing your right forward and beginning the movement in the right direction. Each movement may be done seven, nine or twelve times or according to the wisdom of your body. The movements may be done in any order, depending on your preference. If you have only a few minutes to do Tai Chi, choose one or two favourite movements that especially nourish you. ***On the left side you receive or bring energy into your being, focusing on yourself. On the right side, you give your energy to others, focusing on the world around you****—family, organisation, community, world. As you meditate with the movements, imagine the energy flowing into you on the left side; as you do the movement on the right side, shine your compassionate love and energy to bring healing to the world.*

The guidance offered below for each exercise outlines the positions required by the feet and arms to make the movements. The corresponding visualisations may be adapted to suit the particular conditions of your context or situation.

The Rocking movement

The people of China do this exercise to generate and increase the energy in their bodies. The Rocking Movement can be done for ten minutes or at the start of a series of Tai Chi movements. It is done only once, as it is done in the centre.

Figure 8.a Raising hands

Figure 8.b Moving hands downwards

FOOT POSITION

Start off by putting your feet on the ground and connecting with the energy of the earth through imaginary roots growing from the bottom of your feet. Stand straight with your feet separated, shoulder-width and your hands by your sides. Raise your heels and at the same time raise your hands to the level of your chest with your palms facing upwards (figure 8.a). Turn your palms and move your hands downward while you lower your heels and raise your toes in a rocking movement (figure 8.b). If your body feels wobbly or unbalanced, imagine a centre of balance within your abdomen, like a long umbilical cord that connects you to the earth. Continue the motion, slowly rocking back and forth while you breathe deeply. With each move drop your shoulders and relax your arms and fingers. Do the exercise smoothly and slowly. Breathe deeply and imagine that your feet are planted securely on Mother Earth and that your toes are like long roots connecting with the nourishing energy of the earth. As you raise your hands, imagine that you are able to bring down the energy of the heavens to cleanse and fill you. Sweep your fingers through the air, feeling interconnected with all beings. Exhale all the tension and worry and breathe in the peace and abundance of nature around you.

The Shower of Light

Figure 9.a Feeling the shower of light

Figure 9.b Letting go of the negativity

MOVEMENT

With your left foot forward and palms facing each other at a distance of about one foot, move your hands in a circular motion upwards to head level and then downwards, as if receiving a shower of light (figure 9.a). Feel the shower of energy cleansing your aura and your energy field, filling and nourishing your body, mind and spirit. Repeat on the right side, with your right foot forward. Imagine the life force energy that surrounds you. As you do the movement on the left side, get in touch with any stress, tension or negativity you may be holding on to, and let it go. As you raise your hands, breathe in the shower of light and as you lower your hands, exhale and let go of any negativity within you. Feel the light of the heavens cleansing and renewing you. As you do the movement on the right side, get in touch with the violence and negativity in the larger world around you. In the name of the human community, commit yourself to healing the wounds of violence around you. Breathe in the cleansing light to strengthen the human community.

Let go and open to receive

Figure 10.a Letting go and opening

Figure 10.b Receiving the abundance of life

MOVEMENT

With your left foot forward, palms curved softly downward and hands at chest level, push your hands outward in a gentle arc (figure 10. a), letting go of all the tension, negativity and violence in your being. Turn your palms upward and draw them back towards the chest, breathing in the goodness and abundance of life (figure 10.b). Repeat with the right foot forward.

Connect with whatever wounds, tension or violence you may be holding in your heart.

As you do the movement on the left side, breathe out the pain and violence. Breathe in peace, grace and the abundance of life around you. As you do the movement on the right side, connect with the violence and pain of the world. In the name of the human community, let go of the violence and breathe in the peace and healing needed in our world.

Fly through the air

Figure 11. Flying through the air

MOVEMENT

With your left foot forward, your left hand above your left shoulder, palm outward, your right palm upward, level with your right waist, swim or fly through the warm, energising air. Enjoy the grace and lightness of your body. The motion should be free and light, with arms and shoulders relaxed. Repeat the movement on the right side starting with your right hand above your right shoulder and left palm at your left waist. Fly freely through the air letting go of all that weighs you down, feeling the liberation of your spirit. Think of all the possibilities and desires you have for your life and growth. Open your heart to begin manifesting these. As you fly on the right side, imagine all the possibilities for the human family in different parts of the world. Imagine you are able to fly around the planet encouraging and inspiring all those you meet.

End with an Acknowledgement of Each Person

Just before you leave the circle, encourage the participants to stand still for a moment and take three deep breaths and observe how they are feeling. Look around the circle, acknowledging the humanity and uniqueness of each person who is present. Alternatively, 'hug each other with your eyes', as one participant put it once. This is a moment for everyone—no matter what their differences are according to gender, race, class, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, educational level, religion—to feel a sense of acceptance and 'connection' with each other and the world. You can remind the participants to treat each other with a similar sense of respectfulness as they move through the rest of their day.

Usefulness and Stories

Figure 12. Group practicing Tai Chi

Tai Chi is useful:

- at the beginning of any kind of meeting. It helps participants to become aware of the space, the situation and each other. It also helps them to reconnect with their own bodies and movement. It must be done with all participants standing in a circle, which enables them to see and connect with each other.
- during a meeting (one or more movements) when people are tired and need to stretch
- during a meeting when the dynamics in the room feel stuck or uncomfortable

All four movements mentioned earlier are also very helpful for those who have suffered some kind of trauma. Doing them regularly can make a significant contribution to helping one recover one's energy and sense of well-being.

STORIES

Ma Thandi from Vukani says:
"We have been using Tai Chi as one of the methodologies in order to keep people centred and present in the room. This also helps women and youth deal with the pain they have carried in their bodies sometimes for years and enables them to be present in the room."

Pheoban Abate, a young Ethiopian from a relatively large semi-bureaucratic organisation, reports how the exercises helped break down barriers between her and her male managers. The first time I met Pheoban, she was a participant in a 'Gender at Work' workshop. To begin the day, we invited Pheoban and her managers, outside the building to experience Tai Chi. Phoeban reflects:
"The first time we did the Tai Chi, I was totally shy. My hands were not even moving. It was the first time that our organisation was exposed to this. To do it with my managers was difficult for me but you have changed this."
Phoeban's experience enabled her to see existing organisational hierarchies in new ways (Friedman 2010:14).

A colleague of ours from from KwaZulu/Natal, South Africa describes how she has adapted the 'Shower of Light' exercise for use in her context:
"In rural areas where water is needed, I convert the exercise from Tai Chi on the shower of light into an image of lifting a huge bucket of... water... and ask the group to imagine pouring this over themselves. I explain that we need to imagine this water seeping deep within our body swirling softly around those places, which are feeling pain and gently easing them.... Groups love this exercise and always request it." (Friedman, 2010:17).

Tai Chi plays an important role in helping to cultivate dignity and respect and challenge 'otherness', objectification, separation and hierarchy. As a Gender at Work facilitator says:
"They help open up people to themselves and to see each other as humans, building tolerance and trust, acceptance and forgiveness; creating a common space. The work is a leveller" (in Friedman, 2010:13).

Sara Claasen, a farmworker living in the Western Cape, South Africa says about the Tai Chi exercises:
"I close my eyes and focus on the exercises and it brings relaxation in my body and mind" (in Transforming Power, A Knotted Rope, p. 63).

5. EXERCISES TO HELP RELEASE ANGER AND BUILD INNER POWER

These exercises help to release anger and frustration and build inner power. In a situation where people feel silenced and cannot find their voice or in a very tense or conflict situation or where there is a lot pent up anger and frustration, the group can do the following exercises.

Figure 13. Punch and shout with Fists

Figure 14. Roaring like a lion

Figure 15. Complete relaxation

Punch and Shout With Fists

INSTRUCTIONS

Stand with your feet apart, knees bent. Clench your hands into fists at the waist level with palms facing upward. Inhale, open your eyes wide and as you exhale, punch your left fist (then your right) directly forward, turning your fists over so that they face downward when fully extended (figure 13). As you punch your fists forward, discharge your breath and your inner tension with a loud 'HO' sound. Turn to the right and repeat. Turn to the left and punch again. Repeat this sequence in the three directions another three times.

Roar like a lion

INSTRUCTIONS

Pull your arms outward and to the sides, extending the fingers to form claws. Pull your arms forward, bending forward with a ferocious roar, stretching all the muscles in your face and jaw (figure 14). As you do the movement, imagine that you are able to release all the tension and words that are stifled in your throat and jaw. Roar with a full voice coming from deep within your belly. Do this three to five times and then end with the complete relaxation.

Helps recover ones' sense of inner power and release whatever has been kept silent or trapped within. The roaring fortifies the voice and is thus a great prelude to free writing or to speaking publicly.

Complete Relaxation

INSTRUCTIONS

Relax the entire body after the Lion's roar, bending forward from the waist (figure 15). Breathe deeply. Enjoy feeling completely relaxed for a few moments. Then slowly raise your body up, feeling the spinal column relaxing back into place. Shake off any remaining tension in hands, trunk and feet.

Helps: Release frustration, anger, irritability, stored emotion. Energises the body, strengthens metabolism, relieves blockages in gall bladder and liver meridians, releases tension in arms, chest and shoulders, strengthens organs especially the liver, relaxes face and jaw muscles.

STORY

Habesha Nigussie works as a volunteer in a very poor membership credit union association in Eastern Ethiopia. When we first met her, Habesha appeared shy and withdrawn, it was hard to hear her speak. She dressed in an understated way, almost to make her appear invisible. Habesha took the Capacitar practices seriously, practicing them at home over the two years we worked with her. When we last saw her, Habesha was colourfully dressed and when she spoke was easily heard in a large group plenary. Not surprisingly, she told us that one of her favourite exercises is the Lion' roar in which you roar out your frustration and/or silence and connect with your inner power.

6. SELF-AWARENESS EXERCISES

I'm Okay, you're Okay - Assessing Your Psychological Position (1-1.5 HOURS)

A lot of how we personally behave and treat others, especially when we occupy positions of formal leadership (organisational power and authority) is related to our way of understanding basic positions in life. How we feel on the inside translates into the way we relate to others and therefore our management and leadership styles. These are essentially internal feelings or 'positions' of the self. The way you feel about yourself is in turn shaped by your early childhood experiences, parental relationships, emotional traumas and other experiences, including the sort of experiences that you located in your 'personal history with power' exercise. So your sense of yourself is not entirely the result of your social context, although it is certainly influenced by your race, gender, class, education and so forth.

These internal feelings and positions influence our PRACTICES of power. You cannot share power unless you feel empowered yourself and unless you believe that everyone has their own power. This next exercise helps us to deepen our self-understanding and to be more conscious of how our internal power positions influence our behaviour in the organiational context, especially if we occupy formal leadership positions. This exercise is meant to be done individually, though you may want to identify a trusted colleague or friend to help you process the results and think about how to deal with them.

1. Examine the four boxes below and the life positions or psychological stances that they describe. Take your time and try to identify which position best describes how you feel about yourself and others. In which box would you place yourself, at least at this point in time? Or which two boxes do you tend to swing between?
2. None of us remain in any one box forever; we generally move between all four of these positions at different points in time or phases or moments in our life, so we all have a bit of all of them in each of us. But generally, we primarily occupy either one position or tend to swing between two, usually 1 and 2, where we usually start at position 2 and then go into 1. This comes from an internal position of inferiority and the only way we know to feel better is to put someone else down. These internal feelings have consequences for how we participate in an organisation, whether as staff members, leaders or managers.

3. Whatever your diagnosis, the good news is that these positions are not immutable—we can change them with some internal work, especially if we recognise that they impair our ability to work well with others.

1. I'M OK YOU'RE NOT OK	2. I'M NOT OK, YOU'RE OK
This is the 'one up' position, usually constructed after 'I'm not ok, you're ok'. In this position, we are always concerned with defending ourselves via comparison. The I'm Ok'ness is always a little bit tenuous. ORGANISATIONAL STYLE: Involves scoring points at others' expense. Taking all the credit, dominating the space, insisting on their way as the right and only way, speaking loudly, being dismissive in comments and tone of voice. Usually leave others feeling hurt and angry at the end of engagements. This can have a persecutory feel to it or it can be rescuing. In either case, you don't see the other as a competent person who can take full responsibility for what they do. May also feel 'I need to do things all the time, because you won't do it as well as me."	This is when we enter every situation and interaction feeling inferior. It starts with an internal comparison and internal judgement towards ourselves that we are not ok. Of course, the social structures of discrimination can amplify this. Once we feel 'not ok', we give up power to the other, even when they don't ask for it. We feel smaller than what we are, become less competent and feel helpless. This often means that we don't take full adult responsibility for our work position. From this place, we can also take the victim role and blame others and circumstances. ORGANISATIONAL STYLE: Either you can be incompetent, indecisive, and unable to take direction—a collapsed position or you can be defensive and suspicious and think people are dismissing you, when they are actually offering evaluative comments. You are emotional rather than objective and blame others. You give up your power here or try to grasp it through control and flipping to 'I'm ok you're not ok'.

3. I'M NOT OK, YOU'RE NOT OK	4. I'M OK, YOU'RE OK
This is the general picture of a pessimist. In this place, the attitude is that nothing is ever good enough and that nothing will ever change. ORGANISATIONAL STYLE: Obstructive, negative, will always point out what can fail or not work, will be slow to reward, to recognise, to give positive feedback. Will be heavy and difficult to work with.	This is sadly the hardest position for us to cultivate, no matter what our race, class, gender or background. It largely gets created in childhood when and IF we experience being really valued and allowed to make mistakes without being told that we are bad. If we are lucky enough to grow up like this, we learn to keep a space between what we do—which may be unskillful and imperfect—and WHO we are. So we grow up with the essential sense that 'I'm OK, but sometimes I can make a mistake.' For example, a poor black child may have learned a very good internal sense of self and thus be more robust in the face of social discrimination, while a wealthy and well educated white child may not necessarily construct a positive sense of self. ORGANISATIONAL STYLE: This position will allow you to easily handle critical feedback and evaluation without collapsing and taking it personally or becoming defensive and aggressive. There is no sense of being shamed. It also enables you to see other people as essentially OK, and to respond simply to their behaviours rather than to judge and condemn the whole person. The 'I'm okay, You're ok' person will manage others respectfully, by viewing them constructively and simply focusing on the *behaviour* that needs to be corrected rather than whether the *person* isn't good enough. They will also delegate easily and have a vision of the positive possibilities, inherent in those they work with and for. They are very realistic because they don't see others through a position and they are not constantly trying to position themselves in relation to others either. They are the only ones that give good positive feedback consistently.

4. **How to change**, how to work towards 'I'm okay, you're okay'

a) Changing your stance involves intensive 'internal work'. It involves regular reflection, watching your behavioural style, receiving feedback and reflecting on how you can soften some aspects of your behaviour and finally, noticing how you are judging and talking to yourself on the inside.

b) Appointing a coach or mentor who could be a trusted colleague is often useful, if we empower them to accompany us on our internal journey. However, it will work only if we accept that the mirror they hold up to us, might reflect something less than flattering about ourselves.

c) Some people find it useful to cultivate their 'internal critic' or 'witness'—a part of oneself that you permit to observe your actions and interactions with others and to offer you constructive feedback that you may never allow another person to give you. Some spiritual traditions encourage invoking this 'witness', the other self who stands outside us and watches our conduct and in so doing, modifies it in subtle ways[8].

d) The NOT OK position in particular, requires constant maintenance and this is mostly done through an internal negative voice that sets up a filter which blocks out any message or input that challenges your negative view of yourself.

e) The negative positions have to be moved internally, in order to receive external change in the world. Both the inner and the outer have to be changed. The feminist adage 'the personal is political' is very relevant here.

f) If you can afford and have access to a counsellor or a personal coach, that is an excellent way to help you get out of a negative box and into a more self-affirming and other-affirming place. It requires time and effort but it can be done!!

---

8 You may look for guidance on this in many different spiritual traditions, including Zen and Tibetan Buddhism.

Exercise for developing self-awareness on how we all contribute to conflicts

This exercise is useful to gain greater awareness of ourselves and how we work. It is particularly important to do when you find yourself in a difficult situation with someone or a troublesome conflict. When people who are in conflict do this exercise, before they attempt any kind of mediation, it is usually easier to have conversations about what is really going on. When the emotions are running too high, you cannot get into any kind of rational discussion, until the participants have been able to 'own' their own contribution to the dynamic.

INSTRUCTIONS

a) Choose someone you really don't like, or struggle with or have an ongoing uncomfortable feeling with. This must be someone towards whom you feel like this most of the time and not someone with whom you have had a singular incident that irritated you at the moment but afterwards you felt fine.

b) Go inside yourself, to the middle of your body and picture this person. Feel what emerge, and try to name as precisely as you can what exactly it is about this person that you don't like/ hate/blame them for/are most irritated by.

c) Imagine this person as a character in a movie, play or one of your dreams and ask yourself if this character is like you in any way? Do you have anything at all in common with them? Don't get stuck on the content of what they say, for you might both represent very different ideological positions. Instead, consider the feeling quality that comes up—their personality or style of being; their tone of voice; their particular mannerism or behaviour or way of doing something.

d) Having done this exercise has anything changed for you when you now think once again of the specific person you chose to focus upon in point a)?

STORY

Some years ago I was asked to facilitate a session between two organisations that both saw themselves as feminist. One was an NGO working in support of a membership based CBO. The CBO had reached a point in its life where it wanted to become independent and did not want to feel like the 'child' of the NGO any longer. They were spending a great deal of energy in conflict with each other. As a result their morale was low and the services they were both meant to be focusing on providing to the community women, were suffering. The director of the NGO and the chairperson of the CBO (both women) – were both very headstrong and behaved a little like two bulls locking horns. I encouraged them both to do this exercise. They were both able to see how much they were like each other, and this helped them to soften their stance towards each other. Sometimes we have blind spots and can only see something we don't like in ourselves, when we first see it in someone else. The other person might trigger our own unresolved and painful issues and it is easier to blame them than it is to take responsibility for the way we react in the moment which might well be influenced by many other similar historical experiences in our lives. Organisations and the communities they serve, end up benefiting when leaders take responsibility for the strong and often negative reactions that arise when faced with a person they experience as very difficult and who triggers them.

7. Writing Tool to Help with Self-Reflection

Freewriting[9] is a very useful tool that we've used extensively to help and encourage participants in self-reflection as well as to help them sort out difficult emotions.

With freewriting you talk to yourself on paper, keeping your mind as free as possible. Freewriting involves writing quickly and without judgement. It is private—no one needs to see this writing unless you want to show it.

In this toolkit, we suggest you use freewriting for the particular purpose of helping you to reflect on an aspect of yourself. Other benefits of freewriting include:

- strengthens you as a writer and thinker
- liberates energy and helps access powerful ideas
- helps connect with the power of what you have to say (your voice) and with your own natural way with words
- helps deal with emotion, the inner critic and with worries
- helps develop a writing practice

Depending on the context, we'd like to recommend that the facilitator chooses a topic that is relevant to the exercise. For example in the module on power, a freewriting prompt could be :

- Right now I'm feeling.....
- I contribute to creating a feminist organisation by...
- Some ways I know I can and/or have abused power are...
- I participate with others in gossiping (because/about/to)...

Some guidelines on how to free write:

- Decide on a prompt to stimulate the freewriting
- Sit down with a paper and pen (or computer if relevant)
- Time yourself (five to ten minutes) and write without stopping
- Don't try to mentally control what you write, no outlines, no plans
- Don't cross out or change anything
- Don't worry about spelling and grammar

---

9 Freewriting can be used in many ways, also as a tool to help build and improve writing confidence and skill. These notes come from *Louise Dunlap (2007:pg27-52) Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Writing to Make a Difference. New Village Press CA*. See the book for many other ways to use freewriting – also in preparation for longer writing projects.

- Let your mind go wherever it wants
- Honour your own craziness!

Time yourself for 5 to 10 minutes and write without stopping, even if your foot itches or something else interrupts you. Don't pause to think about what you are writing. Don't let the judges inside you get critical.

Don't try to mentally control what you write; don't try to be logical or good. Let the words and ideas come intuitively from deep within, even if you find yourself shifting your direction or going in circles. There is no off-the-subject in free writing.

Don't cross out or change anything. If you don't like your words, note the feeling, put your dislike aside and go on writing. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. Shift into another language if you feel like it. Forget all you were taught about proper English.

Let your mind go wherever it likes. Stay free in your head. Be open to changing your thought and let whatever is deep within come out on paper.

Honour your own craziness. If wild, scary, risky, or dangerous thoughts come up, try to stay with them even though they may be something you would censor immediately if someone were to read it. Taking risks may be exactly what you need to get in touch with, to achieve your true power and freedom.

Relax and let the freewriting stimulate your mind.

Even if no words come to your mind, keep moving your hand. Write spiralling lines, nonsense words or a word you get stuck on (on, on, on) until your mind clicks back into action and more words come to mind. You can write 'my hand is tired', you can leave blanks, or even make up new words.

If your mind is jumping around let your free writing jump around with it.

Get comfortable with the chaos; that can lead to powerful writing.

REFERENCES

Barry, Jane & Dordević, Jelena (2007). What's the Point of Revolution if we can't Dance?. Retrieved from http://urgentactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/06/WTPR-Final-Book.pdf.

Berceli, David (1998). Trauma Releasing Exercises. Pamphlet.

Burmeister, Mary (1985a). Introducing Jin Shin Jyutsu IS. Book III Know Myself be it IS, IS, BOOK III: Physio-Philosophy. J.S.J. Distributors, USA.

Burmeister, Mary (1985b). Introducing Jin Shin Jyutsu IS. Book I: Getting to Know (help) myself art of Living, Basic Daily Tension Releases for Myself. J.S.J. Distributors, USA.

Cane, Patricia (2005). Living in Wellness-Trauma Healing: A Capacitar Manual of Body Mind Spirit Practices for Stress, Trauma and Compassion Fatigue, Capacitar International, Inc.

Friedman, Michel (2010). Becoming The Change You Wish To See In The World. Retrieved from, http://www.genderatwork.org/learning-centre.

Servan-Schreiber, David (2004). Healing without Freud or Prozac. Rodale: London.

Founded in 2000, CREA is a feminist human rights organisation based in New Delhi, India. It is one of the few international women's rights organisations based in the global South, led by Southern feminists, which works at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels. Together with partners from a diverse range of human rights movements and networks, CREA works to advance the rights of women and girls, and the sexual and reproductive freedoms of all people. CREA advocates for positive social change through national and international fora, and provides training and learning opportunities to global activists and leaders through its Institutes.

CREA INDIA
7 Mathura Road, Jangpura B, New Delhi 110014, India
Tel: +91-11-24377707, 24378700 Fax: +91-11-24377708
Email: crea@creaworld.org

CREA NEW YORK
116 East, 16th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10003, U.S.A.
Tel: +1-212-599-1071 Fax: +1-212-599-1075
Email: crea@creaworld.org

www.creaworld.org

The information in this toolkit is for dissemination and may be used by anyone with due acknowledgement. It may not be used for commercial purposes.

2014