

Introducing Principles of Conscious Touch and Clear Boundaries from the Ambassadors of Touch (AoT) apprenticeship training program.

Aims of the day:

- to present aspects of touch and communication, within and beyond the professional scope of caring.
- to identify unconscious needs and patterns of behaviour that can lead to poor handling of self and those in one's charge
- to lessen/avoid build of resentment, reaction, irritation, sense of not being respected or not of value
- to be able to identify 'where you begin and end' and how to maintain clear boundaries of touch and attention when working with another individual whose sense of self or boundary may be weak or much stronger than yours
- to become more conscious of your own needs and being, so that you allow and seek out qualities of care for your own maintenance and well being, that you may instinctively provide for others, or through your work as a carer

NB: Not all items on the sample program need to be covered in any one event - if a particular item took the groups interest, others could be shortened or held over to a follow-up day)

Sample 1 Day Program:

Morning Seminar 0900 to 1230/1300

Opening circle : pre-pacing of day ahead / short 'background and experience' self-introduction to allow everyone to 'come on board'

- Sensory based grounding and connecting meditation.
Feedback and 'bubble-ups' on that from participants

- Identification and preliminary definition of key concepts in Conscious Touch , e.g., Energy/Structure - Blank Sheet Approach - Witness State - Optimum Functional Balance - Highest Possible Regard - Involuntary signals of response.
(amplified through experiential exchanges)

"To not respond is a response" (Fritz Smith) Discussion on this and implications

Coffee/tea break 1030/1100

The Vocabulary of Touch : (Developing an awareness of the 'energetics of relationship' in situations and personal interactions - particularly where touch and handling of one person by another is implied , assumed or necessary).

- Interface - Blending - Streaming - Conduit
(short exercises to give body felt sense of some of these differences)

- Instinctive (animal) Trust, Positioning, and 'The Pause'
(interactive leaning and supporting exercises e.g. 'chair rescue' and 'climbing ladder' , again to get embodied sense of concepts)

- Looseness and Slack - The Art of Making a Connection (and releasing it) - Unintentional Overload/Excess/Imposition

- Identifying personal needs/tendencies as a person/as a carer, and the related consequences of projection/investment, identity/role confusion, overwork and exhaustion in the caring (professions)

- Closing circle and meditation to integrate morning

Lunch 1230 to 1330

Afternoon Session: 1330 to 1700/1730

- Check in and 'bubble-ups' from the morning?

- Using 'self-awareness cues' (body signals/inner voice), and conscious thought protocols to navigate situations and relationships :
Observation and description rather than interpretation - "what's happening?", "What am I feeling ?", "Is something not working?",
Can I do something to improve things?"

Feedback protocols :

Owning your experience using "I statements" (e.g., "I felt this when . . ."), rather than 'projecting or accusative statements' (e.g., "You make me feel this when")

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Afternoon tea break 1500/1530

Well Being, Self-Care and Self Preservation of Carers in a culture of self sacrifice, or amongst inherited attitudes of 'ignoring ones own limits', or with the assumed priorities of 'those in need' over those giving assistance.

Ways of saying 'No' or "Enough" or "I need help"

Discussion and examples from participants experience

and/or:

- Loneliness, Isolation and Belonging (alternative discussion or secondary discussion if group splits into smaller group). Being a carer as both a talent to serve and nourish, and/or as an unconscious strategy of caring for others instead of being cared for and loved yourself .

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Personal Work/Meditation:

- Parallel Breath meditation: A body-focused coordination of mind and body to:

- bring calm and equanimity in stressful times

- to recenter or 'ground' a person in their whole being rather than just being 'in their head'

- to position or prepare before an important or stressful event / a way of settling/integrating post such an event -

- to allow separation of a person and their identity and potential, from the issues/circumstances that beset or challenge them

- to allow shy, hidden, or 'taboo' aspects of self to speak

- to take charge of one's self and responses to stress in circumstances where there is a loss of control over events and people (including disease and death of loved ones, and those under our care)

- to help diminish pain and anxiety through positive distraction and

attention elsewhere

- a tool for self-help that can be used in 5 minutes or done together with someone from 10 to 30 minutes, (including one's client), as a creative, companionable or therapeutic contribution

- and so on . .

CLOSING DISCUSSION AND CONSCIOUS DISCONNECT OF THE GROUP (with invitation to remain in touch and continue discussion / support on line, and through other self generated meetings)

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The sample outline above can be expanded/contracted in content or time. For it to be 'got' and 'embodied', it needs to go at a reasonable pace, without contradicting its own principles of optimum connection and communication, and without sensory or information overload.

Each group's experience will be different and therefore spend more or less time at different places in the day's schedule.

No matter what emphasis occurs in any individual workshop, the essential importance or significance of the day, to each participant's working or personal life, should have been transmitted through a broad appeal to their consciousness through all the senses.

Feedback, individually and in group, will either support this assertion, or alert the facilitator to a need for adjustment.

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