

One of the characteristics that distinguishes Organizational Transformation from traditional organizational development is the power and depth with which we engage the Hearts & Minds of our clients. This work requires trust and vulnerability from our clients, and skill and courage from the change agent.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a framework, principles and practices to guide the facilitator of organizational transformation in this profound and sacred work.

### **The Wheel of Change**

In earlier papers, we have asserted that in order to effect transformation – whether in an individual, an organization, or society – we need to attend to three domains of human experience:

#### **1. Hearts & Minds**

What people think and feel – their motivations, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, etc.

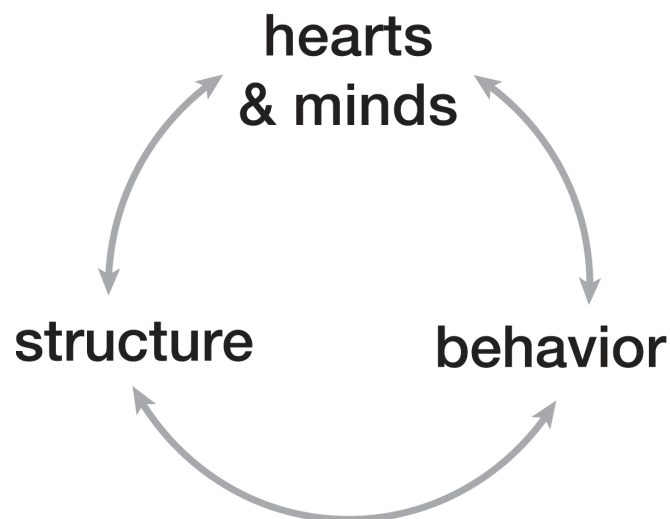
#### **2. Behavior**

What human beings actually do – their words and deeds, the actual choices they make to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act.

#### **3. Structure**

The external environmental realities that impact Hearts & Minds and Behavior.

## THE WHEEL OF CHANGE



For more on the Wheel of Change, see our publication, *What is Transformation?*  
Available online at: <http://www.stproject.org/resources/publications/>

## Creating context for working with Hearts & Minds

Clients are usually more experienced talking about strategy and job descriptions than feelings and beliefs. In order to engage in Hearts & Minds work, we need to create a safe context – sometimes called a *container* – that is qualitatively different from everyday organizational life.

To look at how to create this context, let's actually use the **Wheel of Change** model:

- **Hearts & Minds:** what shared **assumptions** are needed for working with hearts and minds?
- **Behavior:** what specific **behaviors** support this work?
- **Structure:** what **processes** help facilitate this work?

We'll explore these one at a time.

## Assumptions

There are certain assumptions that underlie transformational work with Hearts & Minds that may or may not be shared by our clients. It's important to make these key assumptions explicit and help clients to see and accept their value before proceeding with the work.

### 1. People matter.

Most leaders will say that their people matter and are key to success. Yet, in the rush and pressures of organizational life, concern for people gets lost. We want to establish agreement up front on the need to create a different context and set of norms for the work ahead – one that focuses far more than usual on what the human beings who make up the organization really think and feel. The transformational process prioritizes and values people, and calls out their commitment and contribution.

*"Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it themselves."*

– Stephen Covey

### 2. Individual transformation is essential for Organizational Transformation.

For practitioners of Organizational Transformation, this is such a foundational assumption that we can forget that our clients may not already share this belief. We especially need to make sure that top leaders understand that they themselves have to transform – not just their staff.

*"It is not organizations that transform, but people. Transformations can be accelerated by acting to maximize the likelihood that vast numbers of individuals will make positive choices in relation to how their personal behaviors influence the desired culture. Company transformation accelerates when a critical mass of leaders transform themselves."*

– Carolyn Aiken, from *The Performance Culture Imperative*

### 3. Go slow to go fast.

The pace and quality of time and space in Hearts & Minds work needs to be slower than the intense, fast-driving cultures of most non-profits. This allows for more self-reflection, deeper quality of thinking, space to feel, new ideas to be birthed, and new connections to be made.

Some people may get impatient to get on with the “real work.” Our job is to keep making the case for the value of the investment of time in terms of organizational results. When there is low trust or lack of alignment on where a team is going, tasks like planning are boggy and unproductive. We know that investing the time to “tune-up” teams will pay huge dividends in the amount and quality of work produced. Make sure the client understands and is on board.

*“Watching champion athletes, we see they often seem to be moving in slow motion, yet they are running faster than others or hitting the ball farther, with more precision, because they have eliminated unnecessary moves.”*

– Sakyong Mipham, from *Ruling Your World*

### 4. Breakthroughs are possible.

Incremental change is important. Ongoing adjustments, tweaks and improvements to existing practices and processes are part of any high-performing organization. However, in Organizational Transformation, we add to incremental change a focus on creating breakthroughs. We want to inspire clients to the possibility that breakthroughs are possible. And, it’s precisely in the domain of Hearts & Minds that we may often see the most rapid and important breakthroughs.

*“Problems cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them.”*

– Albert Einstein

### 5. Feelings matter.

Most of our organizations operate in the dominant cultural paradigm that discounts emotions and values only reason. To people living in this paradigm, feelings can seem irrational, chaotic and threatening. Share with clients the compelling research from the growing field of Emotional Intelligence that demonstrates the criticality for leaders and organizations to strengthen their ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions.<sup>1</sup>

*“It’s not a question of strategy that gets us into trouble; it is a question of emotions.”*

– John Kotter of Harvard Business School

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<sup>1</sup> Goleman, Daniel, *Leadership: The Power of Emotional Intelligence*, 2011.

## 6. Be the change

Transformation is not talking about change in the future – it's being that change, starting right now. The process of Organizational Transformation must model the changes we seek to implement. A classic example:

*I was coaching an Executive Director who wanted to engage his senior staff more fully in decision-making. He proposed a plan to me about who should make what decisions, what process they should use, and how to make the transition. I suggested that the process, beginning right now, should model the desired end state. Specifically, I recommended that, rather than him and I going off in isolation to figure this out, the ED should engage from the outset those with whom he wants to share power.*

### Aligning Assumptions with our Clients

If Hearts & Minds work seems “soft” to a client, remember, it's not about soft stuff vs. hard stuff. It's about the right stuff and the whole stuff!

The Wheel of Change speaks to most clients in the way it shows Hearts & Minds to be part of a systemic approach to Organizational Transformation. The most skillful way to enroll clients in the assumptions underlying Hearts & Minds work is to make continual links to employee motivation and commitment, organizational performance, and ultimately the success of the mission.

Some best practices:

- Rather than talking about the philosophy of organizational transformation, always start with the chief concerns of the client. Then, make practical linkages to demonstrate how Hearts & Minds will help get them to where they want to go.
- Be prepared to offer specific stories showing what Hearts & Minds work looks like and its positive impact with other clients.
- In some situations, it may be useful to share books or articles from highly credible leaders and authors that support the nature and importance of Hearts & Minds work.
- As always, your own non-defensiveness and relaxed confidence in the value of this approach is the best possible place from which to address possible client skepticism around doing Hearts & Minds work. You negotiate from strength when you are clear that what you're recommending is needed to meet client objectives.
- Negotiate for an opportunity to demonstrate its value. At a certain point, I often say things like, “Are you willing to trust me a bit here. Let me take a couple of hours with your folks to \_\_\_\_\_. Let's see how it goes and then check in afterwards.”

## Behavior

Having these shared assumptions lays a good foundation for the container for Hearts & Minds work. Next, we want to establish with our clients at least four expectations for behavior that will facilitate the work: Full engagement, Authenticity, Attending, and what we might call Learning Behavior. Our job as facilitators is to gain agreement as to the importance of each of these behaviors, then to use some combination of skill, encouragement, challenge, confrontation, charm, and inspiration to help clients live them.

### 1. Full Engagement

The power of Organizational Transformation comes from the full engagement of all key stakeholders. To get the best results, people need to feel empowered to contribute both their energy and their unique perspectives.<sup>2</sup> To the extent that individuals hold back their participation, out of shyness or insecurity, lack of trust, avoidance of conflict, an overly competitive tone of conversation, or poor process, the work suffers.

### 2. Authenticity

Participation is itself important, but the real power of peoples' contribution requires their willingness to say what they really think and feel. In most organizations, there is a significant gap between what people speak about privately and what they are willing to share in team meetings or with top leaders. In Organizational Transformation, we seek to create real breakthroughs in the degree of open and honest communication.

### 3. Attending

These are behaviors that embody the principle that people matter. They're about how we care for each other. Examples of Attending behaviors include: being present, deep listening, affirming feedback, and offering encouragement, appreciation and active support.

*"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention."*

– Rachel Naomi Remen

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<sup>2</sup> De Dreu, Carsten K. W.; West, Michael A., "Minority dissent and team innovation: The importance of participation in decision making," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 86(6), Dec 2001, 1191-1201; Black & Gregerson, *Participative Decision-Making: An Integration of Multiple Dimensions*, Human Relations, July 1997 vol. 50 no. 7 859-878.

#### 4. Learning behaviors

Transformative work is all about learning, and there are certain behaviors that consistently help or inhibit learning.

- *Risking “mistakes.”* Our work in transforming Hearts & Minds calls for the willingness to step in the unknown together and see mistakes as important to the learning cycle.
- *Experimenting with new behavior.* Our habitual ways of doing things are comfortable. Transformative work invites people to consciously experiment with new behavior, even when uncomfortable.
- *Building on what’s right.* Many of our work cultures are habituated to critique. Someone puts out an idea, and we immediately look at what’s wrong with it. There is, of course, a place for critique, but in Hearts & Minds work, when someone offers an idea, we want to encourage further exploration. This might look like asking further questions to draw out their thinking or building off what we agree with.

*“Sustained performance transformation requires constant learning and growth. A learning organization is . . .*

- o *Dedicated to continually enhancing its ability to create its desired future*
- o *Committed to increasing its collective intelligence*
- o *Driven to improve the quality of its members’ thinking, interacting, and mastery”*

– Peter Senge, from *The Fifth Discipline*

#### Evoking Behaviors needed for Hearts & Minds Work

These four behaviors are usually not “normal” in the organizational cultures we engage with. It usually takes some skill and ongoing attention from facilitators to help foster these new behaviors at the level needed for effective Hearts & Minds work. Some basic approaches include:

- **Inviting**

This is our simplest and most direct tool. Invite! While acknowledging the challenges that may exist to adopting these new behaviors, we call out the best in our clients. For example:

*“I’m inviting each of you to take a risk here. It’s normal for there to be a gap between what we’re willing to say in private and what we’ll say in meetings. But, for your organization to accomplish these new ambitious goals, you’re going to need to close that gap. There’s a lot of wisdom and experience in this room, but to get where you want to go, you need to take more risk, to say what you really think...”*

The exact words don’t matter. More important is to speak from your heart, standing confidently in your expertise as a transformational consultant. But it’s always very helpful if senior leaders add their own invitation in a sincere and credible way.

**Formal ground rules**

This is an especially effective method, as people publically agree to the behaviors that will help move the work forward. While it's ideal for groups to co-evolve their own ground rules or team agreements, it's fine for the consultant to also suggest some behaviors that they believe important to a successful process. Having ground rules in place creates a strong basis for accountability.

See our tool: *Creating Team Agreements*

- **Course corrections**

These will always be needed. We need to actively work with the ground rules for them to really take hold. While ground rules need to be enforced, it's important that the spirit be one of learning rather than shaming or punishment.

- Call out especially good examples of the ground rules being demonstrated.
- Deal directly with individual or group behavior inconsistent with ground rules. Redirect and use as teachable moments.
- Encourage group members to begin giving direct feedback to each other.

- **Modeling**

As transformational consultants, we want to “be the change” and model each of the behaviors:

- To bring the full power of our own engagement.
- To inspire our clients with an eye-opening level of authenticity.
- To exquisitely attend to our clients with presence, deep listening and caring.
- To be willing to engage with our own learning rather than hiding behind a veneer of expertise.

But, it is the top leaders within the organization whose modeling has the greatest impact. It is difficult to create credible containers for Heart & Minds work if top leaders aren't bought in and leading the charge with their own commitment to practicing the new behaviors.

- **Training**

One of the most effective ways to instill new behaviors is through explicit training in Hearts & Minds related skills. In my consulting work with organizations, I often include transformational training modules that I developed for the Rockwood Leadership Institute, such as:

*Courageous Conversations Toolkit*

*Deep Listening Survey*

*Managing Your Triggers Toolkit*

*How to Give Feedback*

*How to Receive Feedback*

Available online at [atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation](http://atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation)

**Processes**

As transformational consultants, we hopefully bring a wide array of processes, formats, and tools to facilitate Hearts & Minds work. When used well, such processes help

complete the container for transformation, empowering the assumptions and behaviors underlying Hearts & Minds work. Think of them as creating organized pathways for groups to interact more skillfully towards given goals – almost like a set of neural channels for the group mind.

Visit our online toolkit to access a wide selection of processes for Hearts & Minds work.

Processes can be very simple yet still effective in supporting the behaviors that support work in Hearts & Minds. Let's look at a few examples of easy methods to promote full engagement.

- Structure conversations in ways that prevent individuals from either dominating or holding back. This can be as simple as requesting that group members don't speak a second time until each person has spoken once. Or, it might look like sitting in a circle and speaking in turn – with or without a talking object.

See our tool: *Wisdom Circle*

- Putting people into dyads or small groups also maximizes participation. When there's competition for airtime, some people tend to hold back in full group discussions. Smaller clusters are also more efficient, as lots of people can produce work simultaneously. For Hearts & Minds work, people will usually feel safer sharing personal material with one or two people rather than in large groups. There's also an important bonus: people bond with each other in these smaller pairings. The large group begins to feel safer, more connected, helping to build that sense of "us."

As another example, here are two easy processes that help foster the behavior of authenticity needed for successful Hearts & Minds work. These structured formats facilitate people being forthcoming in group discussions:

- *Let's go around the circle. I'd like to hear from each of you one thing you like about this proposal, and one thing that you don't like or that concerns you.*
- *I'd like each of you to rank your level of agreement with this proposal on a 1 to 5 scale. 1= I totally disagree, 5 = totally agree.*

See our tool: *Levels of Commitment*

There are more sophisticated processes that can help dramatically deepen a group's willingness to give direct feedback to each other:

- *Group-on-one feedback*, where one at a time, each team member receives concentrated feedback about their contributions and needs for improvement as a member of the team.
- *Partnership pairs*, where individuals meet one-on-one with each team member and exchange feedback.
- *The Feedback Line*, where in a structured ritual team members pass down a line and receive 2 minutes of feedback from each team member.

See our tool: *Team Feedback Toolkit*

Processes and tools are important, but it's important to make sure they are well-targeted to serve actual client needs. As facilitators, we sometimes become overly enamored of particular tools and resort too quickly and too often to introducing our favorite processes. Our tools are important assists but not substitutes for aligning assumptions, building



group behavioral agreements, and most of all, our craft and skill to read and respond to the unique needs of each moment.

*“Ultimately, you must forget about technique. The further you progress, the fewer teachings there are.”*

– Morihei Ueshiba, creator of Aikido

## Other Important Considerations in Hearts & Minds Work

### 1. Attend to the whole system

While we work in the domain of Hearts & Minds, we must also always maintain perspective on the domains of Behavior and Structure. The three domains of the Wheel of Change are like three pairs of glasses, three different lenses on reality, each equally important – **and interconnected!** When working with issues that appear to be about Hearts & Minds, we also look to see what Structures might need to shift and the implications for Behavior.

*I was coaching one of the leaders of the Obama re-election campaign. It was three weeks before the election, and his anxieties were growing. “What might I be missing that might cost the President the election?” His mind kept going over and over each element of the campaign. He was having trouble sleeping. Through a Hearts & Minds frame, there might be a tendency to look at remedies like stress reduction or examine what beliefs might be activating unnecessary anxiety. But, I chose to begin by looking through the lens of Structure and categorizing his repeating concerns into six areas. The breakthrough proved to be in creating better work processes for each of the six areas. A survey of the battleground states to get feedback on the speed with which headquarters was handling their requests. Increasing the frequency of senior staff check-ins. Checking analytics twice daily at set times. When we spoke a week later, even though the intensity of the campaign had actually increased, the new structures had led to a marked decrease in anxiety.*

The solution to interpersonal tensions in organizations often involves clarifying or restructuring the roles in which people interact. What seem like interpersonal issues between two department heads may have more to do with lack of role definition than personalities.

Staff retreats are notorious for being great experiences where people openly reconnect to each other and build trust – only to have the effects wear off within a few months because people’s Behavior didn’t change.

What makes work with Hearts & Minds truly transformational is the seamless interplay among all three domains of the Wheel of Change: Hearts & Minds, Behavior and Structure.

### 2. Boundaries for Hearts & Minds work

Hearts & Minds work has historically been under-attended in Progressive circles. This is changing and, while there is sometimes initial resistance, we are also beginning to see the opposite phenomenon – an over-fascination with personal

development. Working with Hearts & Minds and emotions can be very personally engaging and compelling. When organizations begin to engage with ongoing transformative practices, it becomes very important to hold a clear context of what serves the organizational mission. Practices like Somatics<sup>3</sup> and Trigger work<sup>4</sup> may reveal to individuals deep personal issues and trauma. This is an important discovery, but the organization is not the place for people to do their healing work. Clear boundaries need to be maintained between what belongs in the workplace and what belongs in counseling or personal development seminars.

Also, there needs to be clarity around the time and place for Hearts & Minds work in the organization. We don't want to see staff meetings overtaken by personal process or grind to a halt because of a personally difficult exchange between two team members. Teams need to discern when things are better handled out of group meetings.

### 3. Make use of coaching

While group processes are critical to Organizational Transformation, some of the most important work we do in Hearts & Minds is in one-to-one coaching of individuals. We use the word "coaching" to describe a wide variety of interactions:

- **Ongoing coaching:** It's actually called "coaching" and we meet with someone in the organization on a regular basis.
- **Targeted coaching:** We set up one or more coaching-type meetings to meet a particular need that arises in the course of our organizational work. For example:
  - A particular, discrete need for leadership development
  - Helping to move forward a particular agenda, project, etc.
- **Guerilla coaching:** quick interventions, sometimes on breaks in a group process.
  - Needing to enroll or shift a key individual to help move a process along
  - Taking advantage of an important learning opportunity for an individual
  - We notice someone struggling and feel moved to offer support
- **Mediation:** Meeting with two or more individuals separately or together to help build alignment or resolve a conflict.
- Coaching may be initiated by:
  - A request from an individual in the client system
  - The consultant when we perceive a need

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<sup>3</sup> Generative Somatics is a body-centered path, methodology, and change theory by which we can embody transformation, individually and collectively. It is being widely taught to Progressive leaders and organizations through the work of Staci Haines – <http://www.generativesomatics.org>

<sup>4</sup> The practice of Managing Triggers, taught in Rockwood Trainings, was developed by Robert Gass and Judith Ansara. It is a four-step process specifically designed to help people effectively manage their own emotional triggering. It has been taught extensively both to leaders, organizations, and couples in committed relationships. Available online at: [atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation](http://atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation)

- o The key leader/client asking us to intervene  
*I'd like you to go talk to \_\_\_\_.*  
*Please see if you can \_\_\_\_.*

A full exploration of Transformational Coaching is beyond the scope of this paper. For further study, see our tool: *Transformational Coaching Toolkit*

But for now, here are a few tips on coaching Hearts & Minds:

- **Create a bubble of presence**  
 Whether the coaching is a relaxed hour in your client's office with a closed door, on the telephone, or 15 minutes on a break in a hallway in the middle of an intense meeting, for these moments bring your most full and exquisite attention and deep listening to your client. Your presence has great power to touch and engage others.
- **Come from love**  
 When doing organizational change work, we have to hold multiple agendas. Sometimes we're coaching in a situation where we naturally feel deep compassion for our client. Other times, we may be trying to move a large organizational agenda, and we're "coaching" someone who may actually seem like an impediment to the larger progress. Whatever the circumstances, we want to keep our hearts open to clients, with compassion for their struggles, respectful and wishing the best for them. This is true even when we're delivering some strong medicine-- challenging someone's perspectives or confronting them about unskillful behavior.
- **See people's potential**  
 Whoever we sit with, our job is to see and call out their highest potential. We become as we are beheld. By believing in someone's best, we show up as one of those precious figures in their life that help them to grow.  
  
*"We bring out the best in others when we see the best they can be."*  
 – Judith Ansara
- **Be a warrior of truth**  
 At the same time, one of the ways to manifest our love and respect is with radical honesty. If we hold people in a field of love, we can skillfully deliver powerful feedback often without evoking defensiveness.

*"Whenever you have truth it must be given with love, or the message and the messenger will be rejected"*  
 – Mahatma Gandhi

- **Maintain organizational context**

In Organizational Transformation, while we want to help grow individuals, our primary responsibility, and the ultimate purpose of the coaching, is to help grow the organization.

- **Teach them to fish**

Our job is to build organizational capacity and to grow leaders. We want to teach people to fish, rather than serving up fish dinners. Especially when time is short, there can be a natural tendency to give our clients answers. Sometimes it may be right to do so. But when possible, we want to help our clients find their own answers. Ideally at the end of our meetings they come away less impressed with our great wisdom and more confident in their ability to solve their own problems.

*“No one can reveal to you aught but that which lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge... If the teacher is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own wisdom.”*

– Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

#### 4. Peak experiences vs. transformation

In previous papers, we have defined *transformation* as “change that is profound, radical and sustainable, change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.”

Hearts & Minds work can be very powerful, and we often witness what seems like transformation happening before our very eyes. But, the word “sustainable” is important. It’s important to distinguish between a breakthrough or transformational experience, and a more lasting shift in Hearts & Minds.

Teams can have peak moments of alignment, inspiration and collective power. But, if these experiences aren’t backed up with Behavior changes or reinforced by appropriate Structures, the good feelings fade, sometimes giving way to disappointment or cynicism.

In the highly refined conditions of a retreat or training, individuals experience truly profound shifts in perception and feeling. These have the quality of an epiphany: *“Now that I’ve seen or felt this, my life will never be the same.”* It can be very discouraging to discover how quickly our old, habituated patterns all too soon reassert themselves. There is a biological basis of habits, and our neural circuitry doesn’t re-pattern itself from one experience. This in no way invalidates the importance of these transformational moments. They inspire us to what’s possible. We experience a better way of being and it fuels our desire to learn and grow. Peak experiences show us a pathway to an important destination, and each time we take the journey, it gets easier and faster. Eventually, it becomes second nature – the new normal.

*“As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives.”*

– Henry David Thoreau

## 5. Practice, practice, practice

If we don't start to consciously practice new ways of thinking and being, individually and collectively, we helplessly repeat and reinforce our existing patterns.

What to practice? The attitudes and behaviors that the organization has agreed will further the mission and vision. These vary depending on the organizational values and culture. However, there are certain attributes of personal mastery, such as self-responsibility, emotional intelligence, mental and emotional stability, communication skills and accountability, that are fundamental to transforming organizations. Practices can range from tools that I have helped to develop, such as Managing Your Triggers,<sup>5</sup> to mind/body practices, like Forward Stance,<sup>6</sup> Generative Somatics, and Mindfulness Meditation,<sup>7</sup> to such practical tools as the POP Model and the DARCI grid.<sup>8</sup>

Those teams and organizations that commit to some form of group practice are making one of the best imaginable long-term investments in their individual and collective power and well-being.

*“I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each, it is the performance of a dedicated, precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, over and over again in the face of all obstacles... Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired.”*

– Martha Graham

## What Hearts & Minds work requires from consultants

Doing Hearts & Minds work in an organization requires all the experience, skills and professional capacity we bring to doing traditional OD work. But, Hearts & Minds demands even more.<sup>9</sup>

### Quality #1: Presence

Many years ago, one of my mentors said, *“Forget everything you've read. Let your client be the textbook.”*

If we are awake and attentive we can indeed learn in the moment much of what we need to know about working with Hearts & Minds. In this state of heightened

<sup>5</sup> The practice of Managing Triggers, taught in Rockwood Trainings, was developed by Robert Gass and Judith Ansara. It is a four-step process specifically designed to help people effectively manage their own emotional triggering. It has been taught extensively both to leaders, organizations, and couples in committed relationships. Available online at: [atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation](http://atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation)

<sup>6</sup> Forward Stance is a mind-body approach utilizing the physical experience to develop, explore, and demonstrate human actions. Developed by Norma Wong and based on Zen practices, Progressive groups are being trained in Forward Stance to help shift the way in which they move in the world.

<sup>7</sup> Mindfulness Meditation has its roots in Buddhist practices, such as Vipassana and Zen. Popularized by researchers/practitioners, such as Jon Kabat-Zin, it has been actively introduced to activist circles by teachers, such as Angel Kyodo Williams and centers like Spirit Rock, Stone Circles, and Vallecitos.

<sup>8</sup> POP and DARCI are available online at: [atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation](http://atctools.org/resources/tools-for-transformation)

<sup>9</sup> See our article: *The Transformational Consultant*

alertness, our senses are keen. We pick up subtle cues from our environment. We become more attuned to people, their feelings and non-verbal communications. We are more sensitive to dynamics in the room. We have access to our own deep well of intuitive wisdom. There is often a clear sense of what needs to happen.

When we really present with others, we can enter the state of what is called *rapport* – being in sync, being on the same wavelength. Biologically, our mirror neurons become attuned to one another. This ability to really connect with others is fundamental to the mastery of working with Hearts & Minds. Rather than trying to analyze others, we begin to sense in our bodies what others are feeling. We become attuned to their aspirations and their concerns, and sensitized to the energy in the room. We can tell whether people are tracking what we're saying. Without presence, our interventions and effectiveness will be hit or miss.

### **Quality #2: The power of love**

I was mentoring a consultant named Jane who was having challenges with the Executive Director of one of her client organizations. As I listened to Jane talk about this leader, I noticed a somewhat tight, judgmental tone in her voice. Finishing her description, Jane looked up at me and asked, “*So what do I do about this woman?*”

I paused, then asked, “*Are you loving her enough?*” This was the key that unlocked Jane’s own insight. She had begun feeling frustrated, inadequate and judgmental of her client. As Jane’s heart softened, she was able to approach her client from a place of compassion, and reported that the relationship and quality of coaching dramatically shifted. She told me that she had learned a most valuable lesson – to “love your client.”

We’re obviously not talking about “love” in the sense of a personal relationship. Decades of research have shown that a fundamental condition in all successful helping relationships – psychotherapists, counselors, clergy, educators, and consultants – is “unconditional positive regard,” the compassionate acceptance of the other.<sup>10</sup> Just as limbic resonance<sup>11</sup> can transmit fear and anger, our caring for others communicates loud and clear. When our hearts are open and we are devoted to our client’s well-being, they instinctively know to trust us. (At least to trust our intent. We also need to demonstrate our competence.)

We express our love through the quality of our attending and our unwavering commitment to their well-being and success.

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<sup>10</sup> The client-centered approach to helping relationships, advanced by Carl Rogers, is one of the most-researched approaches in psychology. There is strong evidence that there are qualities in the helper that account for the success of counseling, educations etc. – regardless of the discipline or techniques: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and accurate empathy.  
<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/pst/21/4/431/>

<sup>11</sup> Limbic resonance: “The capacity for sharing deep emotional states arising from the limbic system of the brain. These states include the dopamine circuit promoting feelings of empathic harmony, and the norepinephrine circuit originating emotional states of fear, anxiety, and anger...a symphony of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other’s inner states.”  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbic\\_resonance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbic_resonance)

### **Quality #3: Fearless truth-telling**

When training consultants, I always ask, *“What is your greatest challenge in doing this work?”* By far the most common concerns expressed are their capacity to confront their clients with difficult feedback.

Raising the level of authentic communication is key to Organizational Transformation. Perhaps our most powerful impact as agents of transformation comes from our own courageous truth-telling.

*“In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.”*

– Czeslaw Milosz

This might look like giving feedback to the top leader.

*“You say you want others in the organization to step up into greater leadership. For this to happen, you’re going to need to examine what’s preventing them. And there are things about your own behavior that are sending mixed messages.”*

It might mean challenging a team.

*“You folks work hard, but a lot of that good energy is wasted. If you don’t clean up your lack of accountability around commitments, you’re not going to be the team you want to be.”*

We sometimes need to put our own contracts on the line.

*“I really want this change process to succeed, but the focus and commitment needed for this to work isn’t consistent enough. Something needs to shift here.”*

Our authentic interventions into the collective Hearts & Minds of our clients are like medicine. We need to be completely comfortable delivering the right dosage at the right time.

*“The gift of truth excels all other gifts.”*

– Buddha

### **Quality #4: Letting go**

Transformation is an emergent process. We don’t have control, although we can guide and midwife. This is especially true in Hearts & Minds work, as we’re dealing with the intangibles and rapidly shifting terrain of what human beings think and feel. The plans we make with our clients may or may not prove to be the right pathway to successful change, and events that first appear as detours, sidetracks or obstacles may prove to be just what was needed. In fact, breakthroughs are often preceded by breakdown and chaos, as old structures start to dissolve and make way for the new.

This asks a lot of us transformational consultants. We feel responsible for the success of our engagements, yet much is beyond our control. There are many moments in a change process where we will not know what's needed.

In the words of Lao Tsu:

*“Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles and the water is clear?  
Can you remain unmoving until the right action shows itself?”*

There are other moments when everything seems to go awry, and we may feel a rush of anxiety. My wife, Judith Ansara, uses the metaphor of driving on icy roads when the car starts to skid. Experienced drivers know to override the natural instinct to try to turn away from the direction of skid and instead, turn the wheel into the skid. When our carefully laid plans seem in danger of being derailed can we “turn towards the skid,” embrace the chaos, and see what emerges?

Even as we speak and act with the relaxed confidence needed to guide our clients, can we also be humble about what we know and don't know? Can we model learning for our clients, and can we admit when we're wrong? We invite our clients to step into the unknown. Can we show them the way by modeling our own comfort with ambiguity? It's only the illusion of control we're surrendering!

Those of us called to this work are extremely fortunate. Our work asks that we be more aware, to be more compassionate, more skillful in the way we touch the lives of others, and more open to the mystery that is life.

## **In Conclusion**

Skill in working with the hearts and minds of clients, individually and collectively, is a key competency for those who do Organization Transformation. We create a container for this work by aligning expectations with our clients, establishing the critical behaviors needed for transformational work, and bringing to the work an array of transformative tools and processes. To this cauldron of transformation, as practitioners we bring our own hearts, our courage and our experience to help guide “change that is profound and sustainable.”