Shedding Light on Trust

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Abstract

New Zealand Human Resource Development practitioners interviewed in earlier research indicated that building "trust" is necessary if training efforts in the area of Emotional Intelligence are to be successful. Yet, trust is often not defined clearly by those working in the field of HRD. The objective of the research is to develop a definition of "trust" that is 'actionable' in EI training. To establish a definition of trust that provides HRD practitioners with direction in the design of training programs, a large group conversation utilizing the "World Café" process was undertaken, after which EI training practitioners wrote reflections on the nature of trust. Experienced EI Trainers tend to define trust in terms of the outcome produced in training, which is the readiness of participants to talk. Defining trust in this way has the advantage of involving a low level of inference. Trainers also identify actions within their control that could stimulate greater readiness amongst training participants.

Introduction

Trust is a central issue for Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners, who seek to make fundamental change through training efforts. People involved in education with both children and adults recognise that the relationship between the educator and the learner often has a profound influence on the quality of learning. This is especially the case when training aims to address matters that are highly personal; issues that are at the core of a learner's identity. Trainers need to be able to create an environment characterised by trust, so learners feel free to contemplate personal change or reflect on events that they find challenging.

Yet the nature of trust can be confusing particularly for those, such as HRD practitioners, who rely upon it in their professional work. Trust can seem ethereal: difficult and time-consuming to create, yet easy to destroy and quick to disappear.

In this article we report on a research effort designed to explore the meanings that an experienced group of HRD practitioners working in the area of Emotional Intelligence training associate with trust and the implications they have for their practice. The objective of the research is to provide a practice-based definition of trust that can inform HRD practitioners working in the field of Emotional Intelligence.

Background

This article is based on a research activity that took place as a part of larger project which explored the training design decisions made by experienced trainers working in the field of emotional intelligence (EI). EI refers to "the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). In the initial stages of the research, a group of 22 EI Trainers mostly from New Zealand were identified as having expertise in the area of EI Training.

Senge and Kim (1997) have expressed the concern that many communities of practice are fragmented on the basis of professional orientation. In order to generate a variety of perspectives on EI Training Design an effort is made to ensure that the sample of trainers includes representatives of three groups:

- *Academics*, who are employed within tertiary education institutions and might be expected to take a research-oriented approach to training;

- *Consultants*, who are employed within consulting firms and might be expected to be oriented more toward personal growth of participants in programs; and

- *Practitioners*, who are employed as specialist trainers within the organisations for which they provide training and might be expected to be oriented more toward organisational outcomes.

Interviews were conducted with 22 EI Trainers, and the interview data was analysed to identify themes relating to the design of training. Key themes emerging from the interviews include as follows: (1) EI training involves generating a reinforcing process to support the growth of self-awareness amongst participants; (2) EI trainers need to create an environment in which course participants feel safe to work through the perturbing feelings associated with self-awareness; and (3) that trust is an essential element of the training environment.

An interesting finding is that in the majority of interviews EI Trainers express gratitude for the opportunity to talk about their training design decisions. While they appreciate the need to reflect on their work, most say they had little opportunity to discuss this aspect of their work with others who face similar challenges. The researchers conclude that connections between New Zealand EI Trainers are too weak for them to be considered as a Community of Practice; while they share the same domain of interest, they are not connected as a community and therefore, any developed practices tend to be based on individual rather than collective learning (Wenger, 1998). At the same time, EI Trainers interviewed express the desire to be connected with colleagues working in the same field.

On the basis of these results, the authors set out to advance the research in a way that contribute toward two outcomes: (1) further defining the nature of trust and its role in EI Training; and (2) conducting the research in a way that enable the EI Trainers to form connections with one another, thus providing a foundation for a more integrated community of practice.

Before describing the approach taken in the research, the article will review literature on the issue of trust.

Trust in Organisational Life

Trust involves acting on the expectation that the word of an individual or group can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967). In organisational life, where individuals are seldom able to generate the results they need in isolation from others, trust enables people to engage in collaborative activities, depending on others to contribute what they have agreed to do.

Of course, people at work may not always deliver what we hope they will or what we are depending on them to contribute to collaborative efforts. People may lack either the ethical integrity to follow through on their word, deciding instead to pursue self-interest, or may lack the competence to deliver what is needed (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan & Switzler, 2008). Consequently, everyone experiences situations where they rely on others only to be let down.

Because people are not always reliable, trust is associated with feelings of vulnerability. When a person chooses to trust another they demonstrate a willingness to be vulnerable to the other's actions. The trusting person does so despite understanding they are not able to control the actions of the one being trusted (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). The trusting person is willing to be vulnerable even though they may be uncertain of the other's motives or intentions (Kramer, 1999).

People vary in the degree to which they are prepared to trust others. A range of factors can make people reluctant to be vulnerable to the influence of others, including past trauma and fear (Daft, 2002). Trust is usually freely given until a betrayal occurs; over time, people learn to moderate trust by weighing up the risk involved, their personal willingness to put

themselves at risk, and the benefits they may accrue by extending trust (Kramer, 1999).

Of course, the character of the person being trusted is critical to whether one extends trust or not: we tend to trust people who are trustworthy. People prove themselves trustworthy, by earning trust over time and by repeatedly demonstrating perceived moral behaviour. When we observe others over time we have opportunity to learn the boundaries within which they can be relied upon. Because trust is important for most people they often consciously or unconsciously test the boundaries of others' ethical behaviour; with each test that is successfully passed, the trustworthiness of others is established (Redling, 2004). Harari (2002) reports a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and the values of openness, integrity, benevolence, and competency.

A complicating issue is that trust and distrust are often determined on the basis of expectations that have not been explicitly communicated to others. The term 'psychological contract' is used to describe a reciprocal exchange agreement between individuals in which the parties expect and rely upon the other to perform certain behaviours or undertake various obligations. The parties to a psychological contract consider one another bound by a promise or a debt to one another that is reciprocal. However, the nature of the contract obligations may not have been explicitly stated (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). In other words, an individual may behave in a way that benefits a colleague, expecting that the colleague will reciprocate in some way. There may be a belief that the colleague is indebted to the individual and obliged to reciprocate, but the expectations are not explicitly discussed with the colleague

even though there is an expectation of how they should behave. When the colleague fails to perform as expected, the original individual deems the colleague to be untrustworthy.

Daft (2002) has outlined how the process of trust erosion operates as a reinforcing feedback loop. As people withdraw trust they also become more reluctant to communicate and collaborate with others, through fear that they will let down (again). As they communicate less, others are less likely to understand what is expected of them, therefore further violating implicit agreements, leading to even lower levels of trust.

Changing Times

As discussed, trust is generally seen as an important element in collaborative relationships. Yet the growing complexity of the world in which such relationships exist, in combination with the dynamics of trust that have been discussed above, gives rise to greater levels of cynicism or distrust in many organisations. A number of factors are in play.

Firstly, globalisation means that individuals often collaborate with people from different cultures and communities; people who do not share the same values or norms and who do not have the same expectations as to what constitutes reciprocal behaviour. Because people hold different values, implicit expectations such as how one another will behave are often violated and leave people with a sense that their colleagues cannot be trusted in even small matters, or a perception that some cultures are more (or less) trustworthy than others.

Increasing complexity also means that organisational executives face a bewildering and chaotic environment in which they have to act as stewards of their organisations (Oshry, 1999). When employees may believe that there is an implicit psychological contract in which the employer is under obligation to deliver certain benefits or assurances, executives require greater flexibility of action as they try to meet the needs of a range of stakeholders with diverse expectations. Even the most well-intentioned executive is likely to prove unreliable in delivering all that they are expected to do. As a consequence, while employees tend to trust their immediate boss, less trust is shown in those further up the management hierarchy (Overell, 2003).

Added to this complexity is a growing pervasiveness of unethical behaviour in society. Behaviour such as lying, cheating and stealing is endemic and ubiquitous to the point where many employees at all levels of organisations consider it normalised behaviour (Overell, 2003). Other institutions that have previously been considered by many to be reliable and trustworthy, such as churches, political organisations and banks have by their actions undermined trust and contributed to increased cynicism in society (Stephenson, 2004).

These changes can be expected to have a number of very direct and important impacts on EI Trainers and training. Firstly, mounting levels of unethical behaviour in society increase the need for people to develop competencies such as resilience and empathy, so a growing demand for high quality EI training might be expected.

Further, those participating in training can be expected to have relatively high levels of cynicism, having had trust in others repeatedly betrayed. And, of course, EI Trainers are not immune from the dynamics discussed above. They too are likely to have experienced betrayal,

and to experience reluctance in making themselves vulnerable to the influence of others.

Also, adding to the complexity is the research suggesting that the work of EI training is closely connected with vulnerability. Learning can take place at either a 'technical' or 'adaptive' level (Heifetz, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). 'Technical' level learning involves developing new skills or techniques, but does not involve challenging deeply held views or assumptions about life that prevent people making significant change in how they behave. 'Adaptive' learning can take place only when such assumptions are surfaced and examined. The process of adaptive learning typically involves challenging learners' fundamental views regarding their identity. For instance, many managers struggle to learn skills associated with delegation. This happens, not because the techniques involved are difficult to master, but because people are limited by assumptions such as their personal need to be in control, or their view of themselves as a person who achieves success through their attention to detail. Receiving feedback from an EI trainer whose assumptions such as these may be dysfunctionally or professionally limiting and involves entering into a highly vulnerable state, in which the learner needs to be confident that the trainer has no 'hidden agenda' behind what is being said.

In summary, trust is a complex issue that is of particular significance to those working in the field of EI Training. EI Trainers might be expected to create an environment in which people experience trust, but to do so they have to deal with a variety of factors that can produce distrust in both themselves and learners. Further complicating this situation is the need to build trust relatively quickly in order to produce desired results from the training work, even though the process of trust-building might normally take significant periods of time during which learners are able to test out the trustworthiness of the trainer. Also, the nature of trust is difficult to define in ways that provide clear guidance to EI trainers who desire to make it as a feature of their work.

Research Findings

Utilising the World Cafe

Against this background the authors explore the research question "How can EI training practitioners design their training in ways that encourage trust?" As discussed earlier, the authors conduct the research utilising an approach that would encourage the formation of an effective Community of Practice amongst EI Trainers. To that end, the Emotional Intelligence Symposium 2012 was organised. Hosted by Otago Polytechnic in New Zealand, the one-day symposium provided a vehicle through which those with an interest in the field of Emotional Intelligence could be brought together. While the symposium was open to any who wished to enrol, the 22 EI Trainers who had participated in the earlier phase of the research were specifically invited; 10 of 22 EI Trainers attended.

The total number of people participating in the Cafe conversation was 45, including 10 EI trainers who had participated in the earlier phase of research. Other participants were those who had enrolled in the symposium, many of whom were staff of Otago Polytechnic.

In order to gather data on the research question, one session of the symposium was set aside for a "World Cafe" exercise. The World Cafe is a conversational process designed to foster collaborative

dialogue at the same time as strengthening the community that is engaged in the conversation (Brown, 2002, 2005). Cafe conversations are based on the assumption that people already possess the knowledge they need to deal with significant challenges they face; the World Cafe process creates the opportunity for people in a group to share knowledge, connect ideas and generate new insights into the question under consideration.

The term 'World Cafe' derives from the realisation that people who might contribute little to organisational discussions tend to naturally engage in conversations when they are in the surroundings of a cafe, talking in small groups. Dialogue can be generated when a person hosting the conversation creates a hospitable space and allows the group to address a question that matters to those taking part. Those participating in a Cafe conversation are encouraged; to contribute their thinking and experience; listen to others, seeking to understand and looking for insights, patterns and deeper questions; and to connect ideas (Brown, 2005).

The Cafe conversation at the EI Symposium was organised so that people sat at coffee tables, in groups of four to six. Large sheets of paper covered the tables, providing opportunity for participants to graphically record their thoughts. One of the authors acted as the host of the conversation. Initially this involved welcoming people to the session, briefly explaining the Cafe conversation process and "cafe etiquette", and presenting people with the question for consideration. The question presented was: "If trust is a key to transformation, what does this require of us when we design training?"

Participants began discussing the question in their groups, with the cafe host observing the dynamics, as opposed to the content, of conversations. From time to time the host introduced variations in the way participants were to talk, with the intention of stimulating new thinking or connecting ideas. The first variation introduced was "Taking Turns to Talk", where each person could speak uninterrupted for 2 minutes to the others at the table. This was introduced as a way to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to contribute.

A second variation, introduced after approximately 20 minutes, was to reorganise the groups. One person at each table was to stay at the table and to act as host to a new group. All others distributed themselves around the room, sitting at other tables. In this way new groups were established, made up of people from several other tables. The host shared a summary of the key thoughts that the previous group at the table had about the question, then invited those newly arrived to share what their tables had discussed. In this way, the thinking of people throughout the room was "cross-pollinated" with ideas from other conversations. This variation was repeated later in the session, so most people had opportunity to be in conversation with 12 to 15 other participants, and through this process of cross-pollination, they were exposed to the thinking of everyone else in the room.

A third variation was to invite people at each table to write a provocative question on a piece of paper, which could be sent as a gift to people at another table, with the intention of stimulating new thinking or with that of introducing a new perspective into the group's interactions. Throughout the Cafe people were able to engage in a conversation with people from a variety of backgrounds, some of whom were experienced in EI training, and others who had little experience.

At the end of the session, participants were invited to spend 15 minutes writing their thoughts or reflections on the original cafe question on paper provided. Participants were told that by handing this paper to one of the researchers they were giving consent for their words to be used as data in research. They were free to choose whether to include their names. Out of 45 Cafe participants, 32 handed in their written reflections. Nine of ten EI Trainers handed in named sheets, which enabled their reflections to be analysed separately where appropriate. One of the nine EI Trainers sent two follow-up emails containing further reflections on the question, while one EI trainer did not comment at all

Responses in the statements of reflection were coded and grouped into themes. Initially, reflections from all 32 responses were analysed to identify common themes. Following that, the reflections of nine EI Trainers were analysed separately, to see what themes emerged from this group in particular. In order to test the validity of conclusions drawn from the reflections of the EI Trainers group, the results and discussion of the research were sent to each of the nine members of this group for endorsement and comment. Five EI trainers provided feedback, with all endorsing our findings.

Defining Trust

Themes emerged progressively through the process of analysis. For that reason, the outcomes of the research will be considered in the sequence in which key patterns became evident to the researchers.
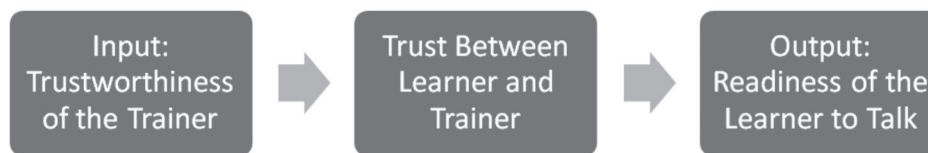
The first theme that becomes evident is the complexity of 'trust'. Even though the question posed in the Cafe conversation focused attention on the design of training, 24 of the 32 participants spent some time reflecting on the nature of trust

and its role in transformation. Several comments indicate that trust is difficult to define and that the process of building trust is challenging for trainers. Several questioned whether trust is really necessary. For example one participant wrote: *"Trust in this context is an illusion... in practice the level of trust [established in the training environment] is probably superficial and a change happens largely by strong leadership."*

Other comments consider whether trust needs to reside between the trainer and the learner, with suggestions that it is equally important for learners to trust themselves and to trust other learners taking part in training activities. Further adding to the complexity, participants comment that trust is not something under the control of the trainer; rather, learners choose whether or not they are going to trust, with some learners being quick and others reluctant to trust.

While this initial finding suggests that efforts to design for trust may be of dubious benefit, greater clarity on the matter is generated when reflections of EI Trainers are considered separately. While this group also wrote about the complex nature of trust, eight out of the nine EI Trainers reflected on the outcomes of trust as a key to understanding its nature and operation.

In an earlier session of the symposium, a keynote speaker had discussed the confusion that exists around the similarly complex concept of leadership. In line with the work of Rost (1991) the speaker contends that confusion is often generated when people define leadership in terms of 'inputs' (such as the qualities of a leader), and the confusion is removed when leadership is defined according to the 'outputs' it generates (in particular, fundamental change).

Figure 1: Elements of Trust

Input: Trustworthiness of the Trainer	→	Trust Between Learner and Trainer	→	Output: Readiness of the Learner to Talk

While none of the reflections directly suggest taking the same 'output-based' approach to defining trust, it is notable that many of the EI Training groups reflected specific, observable outputs generated by a trusting relationship. The output discussed most often is "openness", or the readiness of learners to talk. Indeed, a person's readiness to talk is at times used synonymously with the term 'trust'

Figure 1 shows elements that were used by participants in the research when discussing the nature of trust. Many of the reflections, particularly of the non-EI Trainer participants, deal with the qualities of the Trainer who constitutes 'trustworthiness'. However, focusing on the input end of the process is confusing because the link between trustworthiness and trust is not clear. At times a learner is not prepared to be vulnerable despite working with a highly trustworthy trainer; sometimes trust is determined on the basis of others, perhaps spurious factors, such as whether the trainer is deemed to be an 'expert' or comes from outside the organisation.

Reflections of the EI Trainers highlight that the purpose of trust is to ensure that learners are ready to talk. This output makes the nature of trust much more tangible. A person might claim to be trusting and yet not be ready to disclose issues that made them feel vulnerable: in this situation an experienced EI Trainer would not treat the level of trust being espoused as a true indication of the learner's actual trust. Several comments treat 'trust' as

synonymous with 'readiness to talk', for instance, *"...[trust] is facilitated through active listening",* and *"maybe [trust] is that they can put forward their ideas about themselves without worrying about what others think"* and *"The process of training needs to enable people to trust that they are safe to speak".*

Treating trust as readiness to talk helps EI Trainers to connect trust with the process of transformation. People need to talk openly in order to build self-awareness, which participants see as an essential part of the process of developing greater emotional intelligence and maturity. One EI Trainer expresses the relationship in the following comment: *"Trust enables us to put out stuff that we mightn't ordinarily put out—to make ourselves vulnerable. As we put it out and others listen to us (actively) we make sense of our own lives."*

The boundaries or limits of trust discussed earlier can also be expressed in terms of readiness to talk. People demonstrate the extent of their trust by what they are prepared to talk about, or the degree of vulnerability associated with the content of their conversation. With people we trust, we are ready to disclose which makes us feel most vulnerable. When dealing with people we distrust we disclose very little or, in the extreme, refuse to talk altogether.

On the basis of this perspective we put forward the following definition of trust that is actionable in EI Training: "Trust is the expectation that others can be relied upon, demonstrated through one's

readiness to talk about issues with which one experiences feelings of vulnerability."

Defining trust on the basis of readiness to talk is particularly useful in the context of training because it lowers the level of inference being made by a trainer. As explained by Schwarz (2002) when a trainer observes a learner's behaviour and decides "The learner does not trust me", the trainer is making a high level inference: adding conclusions about the learner's feelings and motives and making an implicit judgment about the learner on the basis of those conclusions. Deciding "the learner is not yet ready to talk about xyz" involves a lower level of inference. Learners are more likely to accept feedback and comments based on low level inference as valid, and reject those based on high level inferences. A trainer's comment to a learner that "you need to trust the group more" is less likely to achieve desired results than saying "can you tell us what you think?"

Similarly, trainers may find it difficult to tell an inappropriately talkative learner that they are "too trusting", yet find it easier to explain that there are limits to how much one should disclose in the early stages of a relationship.

Defining trust in terms of readiness to talk also helps the trainer in the design of training programs. Rather than thinking of how to design for trust, the EI trainer can create situations that lead learners to talk more readily. Thinking of 'trust' as synonymous with 'readiness to talk' in the context of training may also free trainers from anxieties associated with the ethics of what they do. Trainers may be reluctant to ask for trust when learners have not had opportunity to test for trustworthiness. Trainers may be more comfortable creating opportunities for learners to talk freely about the things that concern them

most.

Stimulating Readiness to Talk

Once the researchers begin viewing 'trust' as synonymous with 'readiness to talk' other reflections by EI Trainers could be framed as strategies found to be effective in stimulating productive conversation. When those taking part in the research were explicitly asked to describe how training can be designed to produce trust, answers by the EI Trainers in particular describe strategies for stimulating *talk amongst learners*.

When encouraging participants on a training course to talk, trainers face a number of dilemmas that they need to resolve to produce desired outcomes. Most learners want to receive some new knowledge or insight from the trainer; the more participants talk, the less opportunity the trainer has to share knowledge, which in turn means less opportunity for the trainer to establish credibility based on expertise. Typically, trainers also need to create a healthy learning environment in which for many learners it means that there needs to be some structure and direction to the training. The more learners talk the greater the challenge the trainer has in sticking to pre-determined intentions. Further, trainers want learners to personally choose to talk about matters that are associated with vulnerability; trainers want to influence that choice while not forcing the issue. Several themes emerge as central in the resolution of these dilemmas.

The need for trainers to be *present, flexible, and responsive to learners' needs* was commented on by six of the nine EI Trainers. While issues to do with structure, direction and the trainer's credibility are important, it is evident that trainers view these as establishing a context which

would generate readiness to talk rather than being ends in themselves.

Several EI Trainers mention the need to be 'present', that is, fully engaged in what is happening in the moment, rather than distracted by their own anxieties to interfere with decision-making around what to do next in the program. One commented on the need to *"actively and non-judgmentally try to find out the client's interests...This means that the session is client-focused rather than trainer-focused."* Another said, *"It must always be about the people and not just the content."*

Several mention the need to respond flexibly to needs that emerge and to be sensitive to times when learners are either ready for greater disclosure or feeling that things are moving too fast. One related the following: *"I pushed once and noted that this shifted them in their seat, so I tried to provide a way out...I knew not to push this person again."* Another spoke of seeing engaged participation *"take off"* with one group: *"...it rapidly became apparent to us, the two co-facilitators, that the need for the group to engage at a deep level and establish common experiences...was paramount. What we had to do was 'get out of the way'...We had to throw out our own agenda."*

If trainers aim to generate readiness to talk, they need to be prepared to have the focus of the training extend toward the areas that are of greatest interest to learners. As one EI Trainer commented, *"...the design needs sufficient flexibility to meet the emergent needs of the group."* For this to happen EI trainers cannot be rigid when it comes to structural issues, such as the pace of a program; as one participant noted, *"[The] pacing of learning is a design variable."*

A further theme, discussed by eight of the nine EI Trainers is the need for trainers to model the openness that they want learners to adopt. For trainers who do not want to use overt pressure or coercion to encourage openness, modeling the desired behaviour is an effective strategy; one that requires a high level of emotional maturity in the part of the trainer. Several gave comment that they personally choose to operate from an assumption that people are trustworthy, thus enabling the trainer to make themselves vulnerable. One trainer commented, *"I operate from the basis that people are trustworthy because that is how I am in the world."* According to another, *"My own degree of openness towards the participants will deeply influence the degree of change that is possible."*

Additionally, EI Trainers comment on the power of the stories they use as vehicles for modeling vulnerability along with trustworthy qualities such as humility. Two trainers mention the effectiveness of *"telling bad stories about oneself and good stories about others"*. According to one of the EI Trainers, when acting on the basis of personal vulnerability the trainer establishes *"the expectation of reciprocal trust"*.

Trainer Endorsement

As discussed earlier, EI Trainers who contributed their reflections to this study were given opportunity to read a draft version of this paper and reflect on the conclusions drawn by the authors. The article was sent to nine EI Trainers, seven of whom responded with their reflections.

Five of seven endorse the conclusions drawn, noting in particular that treating "readiness to talk" as synonymous with trust enables trainers to act with greater clarity when designing training interventions.

Two of the responses give general endorsement to the conclusions while expressing qualms about the word "talk". Both indicate that the word seems limited as an indicator of trust. One suggests the term "readiness to engage", which would broaden the scope of the concept to include listening. The other prefer "readiness to disclose", suggesting that to qualify as trusting talk there needs to be a degree of vulnerability in the content of learners' talk.

These responses indicate that the trainers involved in the study see value in the approach discussed in this article, and that more work can be done to refine the concept outlined. In particular, it may be useful to articulate a spectrum of behavior associated with trusting talk. Doing so would provide those involved with EI Training to use the concept of "readiness to talk" with greater precision.

Conclusion

Trust can be a perplexing issue for those attempting to provide training-based interventions designed to develop emotional intelligence. Many people can draw on experiences where they feel they are in "high trust" environments which make a significant contribution to their personal growth. Many training professionals see the need to create an environment in which trust can flourish, yet struggle to conceptualise what this involves in practical terms. In this research we have endeavoured to shed light on the nature of trust, looking for practical ways that trainers working in the EI field can effectively design for what is usually an intangible element of their work.

As we have discussed, clarity around the issue can be gained by shifting from the high-inference term *trust* to the low-inference term *readiness to talk*. Any such shift in thinking brings with it the danger of over-simplifying a complex issue. Yet doing so appears to provide EI trainers with specific direction in how they can resolve dilemmas associated with helping learners develop increased levels of self-awareness.

The relationship between trust and the connections people make through conversation is complex. In this article we have considered how high levels of trust can generate readiness to engage in conversations around personal issues that involve vulnerability. It could also be the case that people are more likely to feel trust towards those with whom they have connected through conversation. If that is the case there could be a reinforcing process of growth involving readiness to talk and feelings of trust; a process that EI trainers aim to generate and manage during their training programs as they seek to generate successful transformation and change.

Notes on Contributors

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