

# Member of an efficient team?

by Petra Brask

***When the GPS said we had arrived, I looked around in disbelief. I had picked up Rikhard, Norwegian participant and friend at Arlanda airport and headed for the north of Sundsvall. Now we were suddenly in the middle of nowhere. It was pitch black and full of snow. The GPS, whom I choose to call Astrid, must be completely wrong? I tried driving a bit further down the road. "Make a U-turn now," cried Astrid quickly and I reversed the car and turned into a small courtyard. We looked skeptically at the building, which in the darkness looked more like a practical school building, and not at all like the fancy conference center, that we expected. Would it really be an exclusive leadership training here? I sighed, turned off Astrid and the car, took a deep breath and went inside.***

The Human Element, the world's best kept secret, says Ron Luyet with a twinkle in his eye when he introduces himself and the program on the first day of the training. Ron was there from the start when the American psychologist Will Schutz founded FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation) – the theory of how members of a group relate to each other.

Will was already in the 50s commissioned by the U.S. Navy to find out why some teams were more effective than others, even though they had the same training and similar experiences. It did not take long for Will to figure out that we are different types of people, with different needs and how to put together groups that could work optimally together. The efficiency increased from 50% to 75%, quite satisfying. But not for Will, he was known for his analytical mind and he would not give up until he found out what the last 25% was due to.

How could they be improved to achieve 100% efficiency in a team? The result was The Human Element. The program that I would now be licensed for. I looked forward to the weeks with awe. Along with 16 other participants, I would from early morning to late evening be drilled in leadership and practice the skills on my classmates. Would I

make it? What if I would spend all this time and all that money and they would say, Sorry Petra, you are not fit for this, please leave. With unease I looked around the classroom. Two weeks, OK, just 14 days left then ...

Our Swedish speaking teacher Per-Åke Sundholm had just gone through the basics of the program when the great American Ron Luyet steps into the classroom. He had just flown in from Japan, where he spends a lot of his time training the Human Element. Pretty soon I find myself thinking about how he could keep such a high tempo with us, even with such a big time difference? No jetlag? Where does the man get all his energy from? I made a note to ask about it. Little did I realize that the answer was partly in the program.

Ron asks us to imagine a metaphor in which emotions are a big pink elephant and on top of the elephant is the governing intellect. All that works wonderfully well, until the elephant gets scared.

Imagine that you face your fears and let them out into the daylight only to realize that they are not that fearful. Imagine the amount of energy you expended to keep those fears at bay. Imagine how you exerted yourself to defend yourself against an environment that triggered these fears, without being aware of it.

"People bond by sharing their scars more than their medals." Says Ron quietly, and stresses the importance of creating a safe environment where participants can share their experiences and realize that they are far from alone in this. To create a safe and open work environment – is a basis to create effective teams.

In various groups and formations, we learned exercises where we can take an inefficient team controlled by fear, acting out their defense systems and turn them into an efficient team. With team members that are confident with each other and can focus on what to do instead of worrying about their place in the group, if they are

sufficiently competent, if someone has a hidden agenda, if they are likable.

I'm fascinated again and again at how basic and obvious our human needs are and the enormous forces that are triggered when these needs are not met.

"This workshop would have gone much better if some of you would step up! You know who you are. "

Ron's words make me choke on my coffee at first and then I see the twinkle in his eye as he explains that sometimes we judge ourselves so hard. Not only are we going to be triggered by colleagues that remind us of situations where we feel inadequate, incompetent or rejected. We have a bunch of parrots on the shoulder that constantly nag at ourselves. Ron explains patiently when these parrots were born.

*"If any part of you is not worthy – when did you first feel this? Listen.*

*It is always leading to your past. Often based on a feeling that you are not good enough. "*

I suddenly realize the seriousness. I look at my classmates, I'm not the only one to have children ... How can I encourage them in a positive way? I note the question and seek help from Ron. It may be a course in leadership, and I cannot imagine a more important leadership than being a parent.

*"Never compare the scores. Comparisons are almost always a form of attack. "*

When you encourage your children remember to:

- Value effort and persistence
- Praise for taking challenge
- Praise interest, energy, enthusiasm
- Praise new learning
- Praise strategies and approaches
- Focus on learning and outcomes
- Use setbacks as learnings
- Use specific feedback.

"This works great on you as well." Ron says with a smile.

Two weeks later, I was relieved standing on the porch of the conference center and watching my certificate in my hand. I made it, phew! I go inside to personally thank the capable chef, Janne, who cooked such good food for us. Osterstroms conference center five miles outside Sundsvall shows its best side in the sunlight that sparkles over the beautiful neighborhood. I hope I get to experience it in the summer sometime. I can only imagine the powerful nature. With tearful eyes I wave goodbye to my fellow students. Side by side we fought and now we are parting. It is sad and at the same time the longing for my family is aching inside.

I get company from Rikhard in the car home as and it is a valuable time to reflect on the new knowledge together. When I drop my Human Element-colleague at Arlanda airport, I continue home lost in thought and become almost surprised when Astrid suddenly says, "You have now arrived at the destination." I look out and see a familiar yellow building. My home, my security, my team. There's no place like...

Wishing you a familiar weekend

## **Petra Brask**

*"I do not want to be friends with anyone who likes me as a friend."*

Woody Allen