

Summary Report

Working Together Effectively – Common Values, Shared Vision

A residential seminar for people who work within
Offender management

7th - 9th June 2005

HELD AT



The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

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Session 1: Identifying Our Values

Common values and a shared vision are essential ingredients in the successful coming together of different service providers, the merging of departments, or the building of teams. Getting the very best out of a new working environment requires mutual respect, honesty and open communication. With a shared vision, we can create the atmosphere of trust and co-operation that makes our work effective and easy.

With the recent creation of the National Offender Management Scheme (NOMS) the above introduction is a timely focus.

To begin to align one's thinking to the theme, participants were asked to consider two questions: - What was the vision that you had for yourself when you began working in prison/probation? - What were the values/qualities that supported that vision?

From the feedback, the most frequently cited values were: honesty, respect, social justice, empathy, non-judgmental listening, compassion, support, diversity hope, learning, self-worth, and trust.

Session 2: Aligning Our Values and Vision

We all have values that we take into the workplace. It is often with the benefit of hindsight that we appreciate how we have used these values.

Dominic Taylor, Prison Officer, HMP Brixton

Dominic was born into a show-business family in which life felt like a court, surrounded by celebrities creating the impression that this was the natural route to becoming rich and famous.

Entering into show business, he made a good living from soap operas and advertising. However, he increasingly experienced problems as he began to find fault with everything and everybody. The

associated unhappiness and confusion Dominic felt was exacerbated by the messages that society gives.

“For example, people in show business must be doing an important job as they are constantly in the news and the papers, surely this must prove what an important job it is they are doing.”

Inside he felt that it was impossible to express his own emotional and spiritual aspirations and yet everyone was saying how well he was doing.

Change came about for Dominic when life had become unmanageable through the use of mind altering substances, mainly alcohol and he realised he needed help. That help came in a non-judgmental way, via people who wanted nothing from him and whose motives were unfamiliar.

This experience led him to do voluntary work in HMP Wandsworth. There he saw people moving from the position of “If the world would stop persecuting me, I would be OK” to thinking and saying “Maybe it's me.” He found this so much more exciting and satisfying than the acting world.

Before becoming a prison officer, Dominic worked with the Probation Service for 6 months. Here he started to realise that perhaps he didn't know it all or have the answer to everything. He now finds himself surrounded by people who ‘carry out endless acts of kindness on a daily basis.’

The fault-finding vision that Dominic used to experience has been transformed to one of recognising need for change. A contributing factor in this has been the discipline that has come from his practice of meditation and the awareness of the need to remain ‘mindful.’

“As a practising Buddhist, excitement for me these days is to take two monks from the local temple on to C wing and see 15 men sit motionless for 30 minutes, concentrating on their breathing, followed by discussion. I find it extremely moving when a prisoner on a drug treatment programme can explain to

me that, through meditation, he has been able to realise that smashing up his cell was about the anger inside him not everybody else. It allowed him to be mindful.”

**Ann Renton, Volunteer, ‘Family Matters’
New Bridge**

Ann began her working life as a hairdresser, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

“I took a great deal of satisfaction from my work. I could see someone transform, albeit only temporarily, in front of my eyes in a very short space of time.”

Following the death of her husband when her children were relatively young she entered the fashion business. Again, this provided quick but temporary results.

“I could see the effect that the loss of their father was having on my children. Whilst I put a great deal of effort into maintaining stability in their lives, I began to understand that real change comes about from within.”

This became more even obvious over a ten year period. When she started to work with homeless teenagers, a light went on!

“I then trained as a Relate counsellor. Whilst doing this work I began to see how many men, struggling with their relationships with both their partner and children, would often have had an extremely difficult relationship with their own father. I began to realize that for many people, difficulties later in life often stemmed from early relationships.”

During this time, Ann saw an advert asking if people would ‘Volunteer to go to Prison’ to help run Parenting Courses. This was when she joined New Bridge.

“My first experience of running a course in prison was in HMP Strangeways with a group of 20 men. It was whilst seeing them bathing plastic dolls and the tenderness that some of them showed, overwhelmed me and I began to realize the depths of longing within so many.”

That work further developed, as well as a joint developmental role in a Mother and Baby Course.

“I have begun to realize that the enormous satisfaction I get from this work comes, in part, from seeing change, this time from within, not a superficial external change.”

My vision is that all people in prison would have the opportunity to take part in these types of courses and this in turn would give one child somewhere a better life. I do believe that NOMS is taking this on board and encouraging family work.”

**Andy Teare, Second Stage Bail
Information Officer, HMP Lewes**

Within the context of the merging of the Probation and Prison Services under the umbrella of NOMS, it might be helpful to look back at the perceived contrast of values between the two services.

The prisons on the one hand have employed values to implement containment/security and discipline. In recent years substantive steps have been made toward resettlement, in the form of education, accommodation, ‘Job Club’, and ‘Pathfinders,’ for example.

Probation, coming from their value-base of engage/assist/befriend, has had to change to be more robust in the implementation of new National Standards: changing nature of interventions with the client; more referrals to systems as opposed to working with offenders.

Andy suggested that, *“Without known and accepted values as a base within both Services there can be neither effective policy nor implementation of what is being asked”*.

He suggested that to return to fundamentals - ‘what is our personal value base,’ ‘how does this equate with our professional lives?’ - while maybe perceived as a philosophical exercise and thereby a luxury within the context of the current pressures, would, however, lead to clarity rather than to confusion, negativity and general dysfunction, as at present.

“Values equals ethics: that which is worthy of esteem for its own sake. My values are how I wish to be remembered; they govern how I see things, how I act, and how I behave.”

This becomes evident through Andy’s story. Employed by Sussex Probation Service and seconded to HMP Lewes as the 2nd Stage Bail Information Officer, Andy interviews all ‘shapes and sizes’. Amongst them are a significant number of repeat offenders who regularly bounce in and out of prison, many over a considerable number of years.

Within this group, Andy described a small but significant sub-group who are diagnosed with Personality Disorder – *“hitherto used as a sink diagnosis for those deemed as untreatable.”* The NHS being unable to give support, these people drop, all too easily, through the support net. They are often anti-social, they cannot cope on the ‘out’, and they re-offend and land back in prison two, three or even four times in a year. This fast becomes their home: they are almost comforted by the familiarity of the surroundings, the prison staff, the routine - they are safe!

“It was in the course of these many interviews that I began to hear from the defendants the underlying tone of fear, desperation, and hopelessness - ‘Is this all my life has to offer?’ It was clear a focus needed to be given to them, that they were owed a due process.”

In January 2003 Andy attended a local NHS Stakeholders meeting, where he voiced his concerns regarding this group of repeat offenders, *“which seemed to be welcomed with appreciative noises, but also with considerable scepticism as to the hopelessness of the cause.”*

He was subsequently asked to take the lead and organise a conference - in October 2003 - from which a prison-led working party was set up. The composite of which includes all statutory and voluntary agencies that have a direct contact with this category of offender.

From research conducted at Lewes, there was a strong indication that some form of Specialist Mentorship Scheme was needed, to recruit the type of professional required, provide support for them, and to enable the initiative to work.

Funding from the European Social Fund is being sought for a pilot programme with a vision of it becoming mainstream.

“This project, derived from shared values collectively held, means that there is a greater chance of due process being given to this vulnerable group of people.”

I feel there is a deep moral value, which needed to be addressed. What has not been happening for these people reflects badly on our society, on us all. We have not professionally addressed needs of these people so that they can maintain their liberty, where within manageable risk parameters.”

Sharing from the Floor

- *“Last night, when we talked about vision, I had some difficulty. The two values I had were ‘love’ and ‘responsibility’ but these were towards family, not prisoners. With the benefit of hindsight, I now realise that those values have extended into the workplace in the 25 years that I have worked in prisons.”*

- *“I felt that the values I experienced in the workshops I run come from within. If one is not whole within, it is a performance. If you are whole, the energy and enthusiasm is infectious which allows the men to be creative and to feel worthy.”*

- *“Seven years of being a prison officer has led me to realize that I started work as a prisoner. To be liberated I had to develop values of acceptance and listening. Working in prison is an allegory for we are all prisoners. By liberating ourselves we can help liberate others.”*

Session 3:

Personal Values, Organisational Values
with Leon Hubbard, Offending Behaviour
Programmes Manager, HMYOI Feltham

The aims of the exercises were to:

- a) understand the process and dynamics an organization or team experiences when moving from inception to full potential.
- b) explore shared vision and values that enable successful teamwork.

Exercise 1: Through group discussion, to explore the team/organisation interactions, expression and values during four developmental phases: formation (form), settling in (storm), normal functioning (norm) and peak performance (perform). Feedback for each phase follows.

Form:

What happens? How might 'form' take different forms?

Shaped from the outside and develops from within; people taking stances/roles; requirement for the context to be defined.

Storm:

What happens? What behaviour might be exhibited?

The following all may become an issue: *age; experience; gender; race; bullying; morale; respect; education; lifestyle; prejudice; fear; perception, anger; barriers; isolation; ego; conflict; communication; stress; competition; polarisation; tolerance; aim of the job gets; lost; indifference; commitment; attachment; inconsistency; personality.*

Norm:

What are 'norms'? What kind of 'norms' might a team develop?

Mutual respect; trust; tolerance; co-operation; shared vision; boundaries, honesty; motivation towards the goal; accepting the whole picture; being non-judgemental.

Perform:

How might the previous sections affect performance?

Openness; honesty; communication; listening; ownership; value; definition of aims; individualism; conflict resolution. This leads to planning and preparation, preventing poor performance.

Exercise 2: Using the question, 'How do we ensure a healthy team/organisation dynamic?' groups shared their vision and values of an organization/team. Feedback is as follows:

Commonality of goal and shared vision; check each member has a common understanding; think about the common good; ownership of the objective through consultation; support for the group and the individual; effective 3D communication; organisational clarity (consistency, reflection of values, co-operation); responsibility (individual and collective); humility; equality of commitment; trust at all levels; appreciation and awareness of each one's skills and roles; creativity; respect for team members and for differences; consideration; tolerance; a willingness to change positions; reflection; fun; power over self (adds power to the team); self-care; recognition of potential; establishment of the most important values

Summary

The exercise was designed to:

- gain a better understanding of ones place in a team, ones values, and what values were shared.
- recognize where higher (spiritual) values can be incorporated to enable consistency, making our lives more harmonious.

Silence Period

A space of four hours was built into the programme, for the purpose of silent reflection.

It was suggested that, 'everything we do comes from a thought and behind every thought lies silence. However, we become so externalised, so caught up in actions and influences that we loose ourselves in them and forget the source. If I understand how to work from the inside out then I will not develop a fear of rejection and low self esteem but an inner stability and strength.

The following comments epitomise the value of the period of silence:

- "When I'm doing some personal, inner work then, after silence, there is always something new to discover. My sense of what is going on, both inside and out, becomes heightened."

- "In giving myself space through silence, I'm able to find solutions more easily. It becomes obvious what I need to do."

Session 5: Developing Inner Power with Maureen Goodman, Programmes Co-ordinator, Brahma Kumaris and Doug Stephenson, Prison Outreach Co-ordinator, Brahma Kumaris.

The session addressed the question of how we develop inner power, when we all too often give it away. To recognise this is so important in our relationships so that, when giving, we are able to maintain a sense of inner power, a strong sense of who we are. For this, attitude is a key.

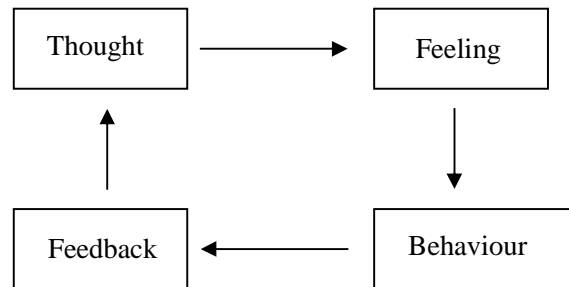
Attitude can be defined as, 'a state of mind with which I approach a situation; a tendency to think along certain lines about a particular subject; a set pattern of thinking that has developed through information and experience.'

Doug encouraged participants to explore their own changing attitudes with the use of a reading that described unique patterns of behaviour in a particular culture, the *Nacirema*, which seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds.

On hearing the description, various attitudes were evident: discomfort, curiosity, disgust. The description, cleverly disguised in evocative language, was actually about cleaning the teeth and the group were American (*Nacirema* spelled backwards.) This demonstrated that an inappropriate attitude would lead to an inappropriate quality of interaction.

How does one know whether an attitude that they hold is appropriate? The indicators include our feelings, the quality of associated thought, body language, reaction/response of those around me, and

experience. These elements actually form a cycle: thoughts are the catalyst for feelings, which impact upon the quality of behaviour, from which one receives feedback from others.



For example the thought, 'I'm not good enough' might result in feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. Translated into action, my behaviour could be of uncertainty and weakness. The feedback I receive could include criticism and blame, which in turn compounds the original thought. In this way, the attitude becomes hardened. To break out of my negative cycles I have got to change my thoughts.

Doug shared a powerful example of a time, many years ago, when he was wrongly accused of trying to turn his four year old son against his ex-wife. After an angry exchange, the threat was made of preventing him from seeing his son again and the phone put down.

"In that moment I experience blinding anger. I tried ringing back but the phone was left off the hook. When I did get through the following day the conversation disintegrated into a shouting match. This was the case for the next few phone calls! Then, on one occasion, as the same emotional pattern was beginning to emerge, I stopped and asked myself, 'Why are you giving away your energy? Without the anger, for the first time I heard her pain.

With the benefit of hindsight, I realised that in the moment of blinding anger, it was as though my vision was limited to only 1 or 2 degrees. Nothing else existed outside that space. When I made the decision not to give away my energy, the vision opened up to 30

degrees. This wider horizon allowed me to see previously obscured opportunities.

Doug suggested that to take this to the other end of the spectrum, a mild expression of anger in the form of irritation might result in 100 degree vision, or as distraction, maybe 160 degree vision. The suggestion was that wherever the power of emotion was present, whether anger or any other emotion, there would be a degree of closing down. To remain completely stable in ones' inner power would enable 180 degree vision.

Such shifts in attitude, associated with respect for another and self respect, would result in a more appropriate behaviour as well as an increased opportunity to bring about a peaceful solution.

Silence and reflection are an essential part of the process of enabling one to explore thoughts, feelings and attitudes and recognise any changes required. A reflective practice is the first step in opening up, unification and harmonisation

Doug closed the session by sharing his personal view that the state in which we can maintain that 180 degree vision is our natural, spiritual state. However, because of influence we now accept that narrower vision as 'natural,' rather than to realise it as having become 'our nature.'

Maureen further explored attitude, linking it to what is 'natural.'

"Am I open to listen and to learn or is there resistance or rejection? This will make such a difference as to how I feel about my self and how I deal with life: a negative attitude and all my power will drain away; a positive, powerful one, and then I actually move away from what is unnatural towards what is natural."

In today's world, we see an increasing emphasis on products and lifestyles that are unnatural. However with time, we see that people develop a resistance to that which is unnatural.

"When we look at our self we again fall into that trap where we have moved away from the experience of what is natural. Seeing the human condition today there is the question – is this how we are meant to live? For myself, the answer is a strong no – there has to be something better."

An insight into that 'better experience' comes through exploring identity. We often label ourselves according to our profession, culture, ethnicity, position, or relationships. All of these factors can change and yet there is the constancy of who I am inside.

"As a little girl, I remember asking questions about what it is like to die? I couldn't imagine not being, not existing! That same little girl, who was asking the questions, is here now. The body has changed and grown up and yet, inside, I am still here. There is a constancy about our inner being, the spiritual part of me, the soul, recognising that, there are cycles of change within that constancy, just as with the seasons."

It is silence that is the trigger, the starting point of that inner journey in which we can find that stable place that is so real, natural, and comfortable. When I connect to that place, I begin to discover my inner qualities and resources. That identity begins to give me a sense of strength.

There are actually five qualities within each one of us that are at the core of what is natural, the source of goodness, that can uplift and bring happiness. They are peace, love, truth, happiness and purity.

"We say that anger is 'natural.' However, how many workshops and courses are about how to obtain peace, whether global peace or peace of mind and how many tell you how to become angry? This indicates that peace is the natural state of being."

Peace is not a passive thing. I link it with a sense of calm and clarity in my thinking, which can galvanise me into action."

Is there anything more powerful than love in this world? Love can transform, melt, uplift, and bring realisation of truth.

There is the example of a paedophile who read one of Dadi Janki's books. The love and compassion with which she spoke to the prisoner, through the text, reached out to him such that after reading the book he was able to confess to his crimes and begin his rehabilitation.

It was felt that the love that the world needs today is an unconditional love, a love that continues to be a constant source that needs nothing in return, that expresses itself through care and compassion. This is again something very natural to the inner being.

Truth. How do we feel when we live by our conscience, by our core values and how do we feel when we do the opposite? There is a lovely saying, 'a clear conscience is the softest pillow.' When I live by that power of truth, I am carefree, there is an ease within.

Happiness is the natural state in human life. Happiness brings joy, upliftment, encouragement and enthusiasm.

Purity is the experience of how I am originally, without pollution of any kind. We see the pollution of our environment but what about the 'pollution' of the self? We have moved away from our original, pure state and we have become 'polluted' by anger, jealousy, fear, and many other negative aspects. The inner journey is about developing the correct relationship with all the external influences and roles.

To experience these core qualities, we need to give time for silence. When we do so and journey within, we mentally move away from all that is artificial, all that is changing, all that causes me to feel inadequate or to feel pain or sorrow.

"Let me have the courage to put that to one side and journey to the original core of my being, to the original, pure self, where none of these unnatural things have a place. Imagine touching that inner core. How would that be and what would be the effect on you?"

It would enable you to get in touch with your real self. Even though things would be changing around you, relationships, difficult situations, etc., you would say, 'I know who I am. I have value because of who I am.' Let me understand and learn what I have to do better

This constancy within is what enables me to stay calm, clear, peaceful, and loveful inside. Giving becomes on the basis of what and who we really are, the treasures of what are really natural to us. It is this inner constancy and the experience of the inner being, that also connects us to the Divine, the source of all.

Coming back to that original form of the self provides infinite possibilities for me in terms of expanding my awareness...not just 180 degrees but 360 degrees, if I want."

Session 6: Building the Vision with Gabriella Goddard, Executive Coach and Director, Claravia Coaching.

Gabriella spoke of the importance of choice in what we do in our life and with our life.

"So often, what prevents us from fulfilling our dreams lies within the prison of our mind; our beliefs, our self-imposed limits. I need to awaken to the bars I put around myself, to let go of my comfort zone. For this to happen, I need trust, to stay centred, and allow the universe to conspire to realise my potential."

Through a series of personal exercises participants were invited to explore:

- *Where are you today?* While seeing the whole picture, Be conscious of the changing relationships between work/social/family.

- *Where do you want to go?* Dare to dream! Let go and rise above your current life and begin to recognise your potential.

- *How are you going to get there?* Recognise which beliefs will hold you back and which will enable you to fulfil your potential; what you need to do more of and what to do less of.

"Do something new every day! Make sure tomorrow isn't just another day!"