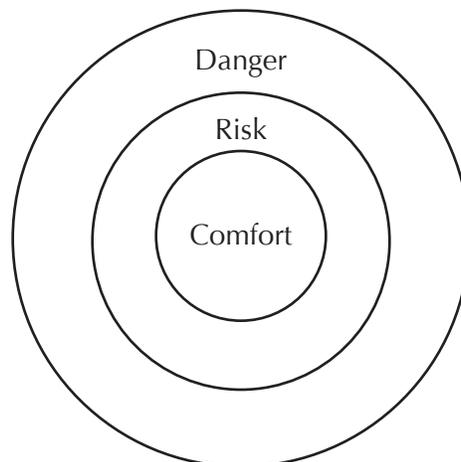




Zones of Comfort, Risk and Danger: Constructing Your Zone Map

The Zones Exercise comes from an unknown source (to me) within the NSRF organization. I first experienced it at the Fall, 2000, Critical Friends Group Symposium in Boca Raton, Florida. I have found the exercise useful and have tried to make notes for others. I hope the originator will claim the invention, and that others will add to this useful exercise as they discover new applications. Marylyn Wentworth, January, 2001.

1. Draw a diagram of concentric circles in the following manner:
 - a. The middle circle is Comfort, the second is Risk, the third is Danger.
 - b. Consider the various aspects of your work (as a CFG Coach, for example). Think about the aspects that feel really comfortable to you, those that feel like there is some risk involved, but generally positive, and those aspects that you know get your hackles up, make you feel defensive, cloud your judgment, make you want to retreat.
 - c. Decide on the size of each Zone based on your consideration. Do you work a lot in your Comfort Zone, your Risk Zone? Do you work only a little in your Danger Zone? Make the size of the Zones reflect the quantity of time you work there.
2. Think about the different activities you do and/or affective domains in which you work (i.e. facilitating groups, leading protocols, designing meetings, guiding peer observation, responding to conflicts between group members...). Make a list if it helps.
3. Put each activity or affective domain into the Zone that best represents your sense of relative Comfort, Risk or Danger.



Observations on the Zones

1. **The Comfort Zone** is usually a place where we feel at ease, with no tension, have a good grip on the topic, like to hear from others about the topic, know how to navigate occasional rough spots with ease. It is also a place to retreat to from the Danger Zone. For example, one of your Danger Zone aspects may be when people start disagreeing with passion and even disrespect. You might find that when that happens you retreat into your Comfort aspect of listening and not intervening, or even find a way to divert the conversation to a topic that is in your Comfort Zone.
2. **The Risk Zone** is the most fertile place for learning. It is where most people are willing to take some risks, not know everything, or sometimes not know anything at all, but clearly know they want to learn and will take the risks necessary to do so. It is where people open up to other people with curiosity and interest, and where they will consider options or ideas they haven't thought of before.
3. **Generally it is not a good idea to work from either your own Danger Zone or anyone else's.** That area is so full of defenses, fears, red-lights, desire for escape, etc, that it requires too much energy and time to accomplish anything from that Zone. The best way to work when you find yourself there is to own that it is a Danger Zone and work on some strategies to move into the Risk Zone (either on your own or with colleagues).

For example, if I feel my anger rising and my body getting rigid when someone says it's time we really clamped down on standardized tests and taught to them right now before the kids failed any more and it is suggested that our CFG should work in that direction as our main focus, I recognize the signs of being in my Danger Zone and know I probably won't be rational when I speak. Therefore I need a strategy. In this case, my strategy will be to ask calmly, "What are the advantages for the students if we do that? What are the advantages for teaching and learning? What are the disadvantages?" Then I have to listen and list. I can't trust myself to do more than ask questions until I become more rational and this isn't such a high level Danger Zone for me.

How to Apply the Zones Productively: Connection to Dilemmas

The Consultancy

1. Review your Zone Map and select a dilemma represented there.
2. Make some notes to give more detail to the dilemma. Notice what Zone the dilemma appears in, or if it is a complex dilemma and has aspects in several Zones.
3. Break into triads and plan your order and time for three Consultancies.
4. As you present your dilemma, use your Zone Map as a reference for the group. They may find fertile ground for probing questions or feedback in your Map, and can see how your dilemma relates to other aspects of your work.

Alternative to the Consultancy

1. Write a dilemma about your work before you come to the Zones Workshop.
2. After you have done the Zones Map, divide into triads.
3. Take turns reading your dilemmas aloud to each other.

4. Discuss the following questions for each person (20 minutes each):
 - a. How does your dilemma relate to your Zone Map? What Zone(s) is the dilemma happening in for you? For others related to your dilemma?
 - b. Are you working in your Danger Zone? Someone else's? Do you need to know about other people's Danger Zones?
 - c. If your dilemma is in your Danger Zone (or someone else's), how can you move those issues into a Risk or Comfort Zone? How might this movement contribute to solving the dilemma?
 - d. What would the other people who contribute to or are affected by your dilemma say about your dilemma?