

Centering and Attention

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(Revised: 31 January 2000 by Clinton Callahan)

FORMAT:

Whole group design and experience in 4 parts.

Duration: 90 minutes

PURPOSE:

To understand and practice what it is to be centered and to pay attention.

SETUP:

Chairs are set up in big circle to begin with. Then setup needs to be full open space, chairs to the walls. After context is laid, a piece of rope and 3 tennis balls are given to each participant.

INTRO / BACKGROUND:

In this process we will first try to do an exercise that we may not understand very well. Then we will create ways to learn the distinctions and skills and awarenesses needed to do the thing, and we will teach those ways to each other. Then we will go back to the original exercise with our new training.

INSTRUCTIONS / PROCEDURE:

Part 1: (10min)

- This exercise has four parts. This is Part 1.
- Find a partner.
- One person in each pair put your hand up. You are Partner A.
- The other person is Partner B.
- Partner B, your job is to stand on one foot, place your attention on the tip of your finger, and not to fall over, look anywhere else, or laugh.
- Partner A, your job is to do everything you can to distract Partner B's attention from their finger and to get them ungrounded, off center and out of balance. It is not okay to physically touch them. Anything else is okay.
- When I say, "Stop, Rotate," please change roles.
- Are there any questions?
- Please begin.
- (After 3 minutes) Okay, please stop.
- Rotate. Partner A, it is your turn to stand on one foot and place your attention on the tip of your finger. Partner B it is your turn to get them ungrounded, off center and out of balance. No touching. Anything else is okay.
- Please begin.

- (After 3 minutes) Okay, please stop.

Background: (15 min)

As human beings, we have two essential experiences to work with. One is our center and the other is our attention.

First let's talk about our CENTER.

- When you are trying to lead a meeting and someone asks a question or makes a comment that is not consistent with the present conversation, they may be trying to take your center away.
- When someone walks into the room and ignores you, or you catch yourself behaving adaptively around them, perhaps you have given your center away to them.
- When someone walks into the room and you experience them as absolutely no threat to you, or you consider them uninteresting, unreliable or boring, perhaps it is because they have given their center away to you or to someone else.
- When we are easily offended, or react emotionally to what is happening around us, perhaps we do not have any relationship with or control over our center, so we are easily upset and unbalanced.

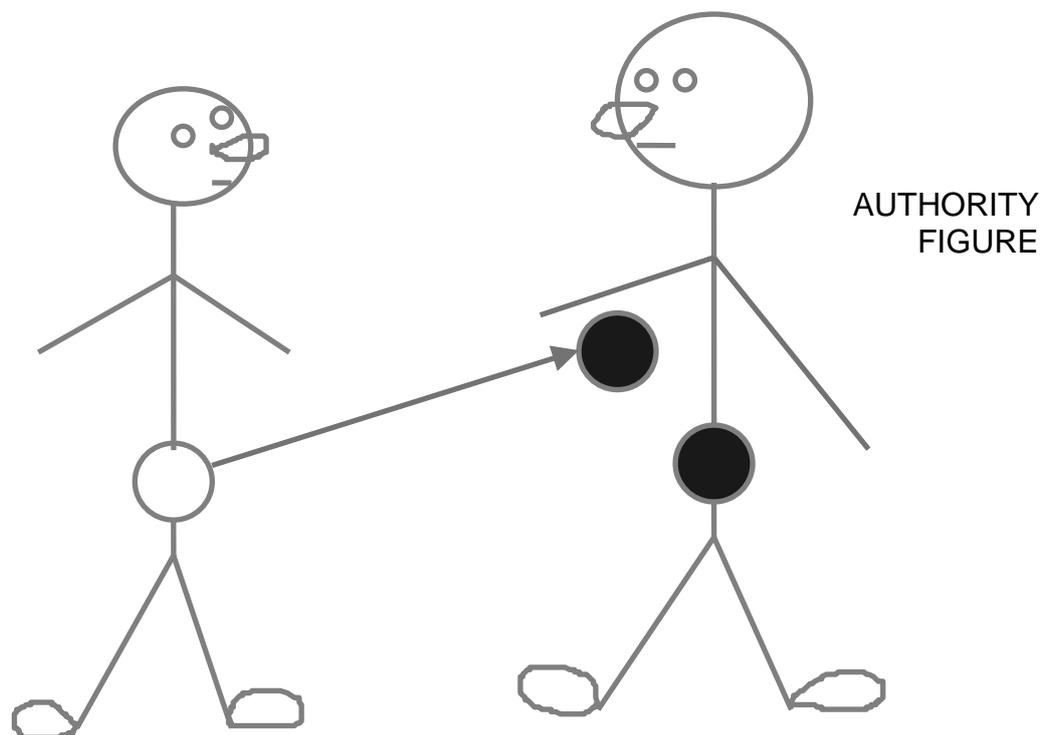


Figure: Giving our center away is an act of survival.

We find an authority figure and give our center to them. We think that we will be safe if we give them our center because they will experience us as completely non-threatening. We can also blame them for things that go wrong. An unconscious leader may try to take people's centers as a way of collecting power. A conscious leader does not want people's centers because his purpose is to create leaders.

In this conversation we are making a distinction between our Physical Center and our Being Center.

- Our Physical Center is our CENTER OF BALANCE, that place which is physically the middle of our body. Our CENTER OF BALANCE is generally located between our hip-bones, halfway back towards our spine.
- Our CENTER OF BEING is mobile. It moves around according to what we want to create, according to our purpose. Unless we learn about our CENTER OF BEING we are not aware of where it is or what we are creating with it. We do have the ability to become aware of our CENTER OF BEING. When we consciously position our CENTER OF BEING at our CENTER OF BALANCE, we refer to that as being CENTERED or GROUNDED.

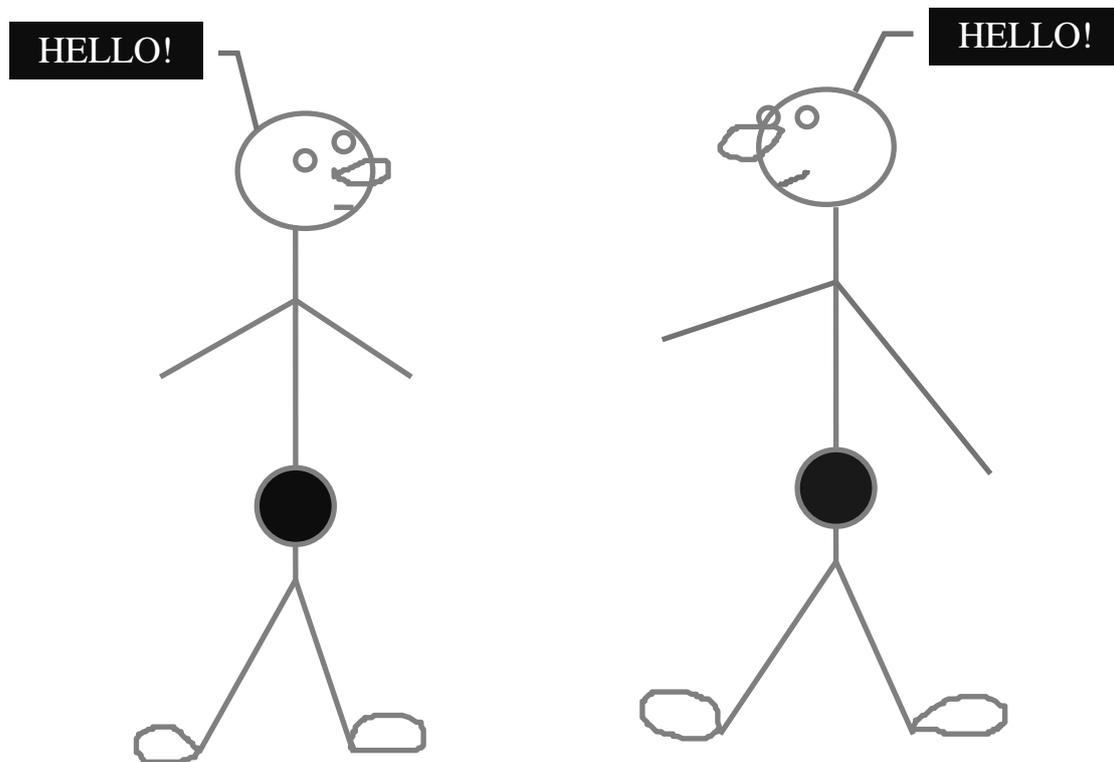


Figure: Centered and grounded. Adult conversations.

ATTENTION:

Now let us talk about attention. We can work with our attention in the same way we could work with any physical object. We can move it, place it, hold it, split it, focus it, spread it, we can lose it, forget about it, give it away, etc.

A creative leader needs to be able to use two kinds of attention, Point Attention and Field Attention.

- Point Attention is a laser tight focus on a single action, commitment, thought, interpretation, goal, etc. Point Attention excludes everything else. This does not mean putting your center on the thing you are paying attention to.
- Example: A man was terrified of talking with women. As soon as he put his attention on a woman he was terrified of being annihilated. We did some work with him and he learned to make the distinction between his center and his attention. He learned to be able to place his attention on a woman and to keep his center at the same time. Now he can talk with women.
- Field Attention is a scanning, roving, floating attention which includes everything and easily detects anomalies. This is a very alert state. It is not spaced out, lazy, asleep, hypnotized, weak, or slow. It is like driving a 15 ton truck at 120 Kilometers per hour down the highway with a very light touch on the steering wheel.
- Example: At any time we can scan over everyone we know with Field Attention and detect who is we have decided are our enemies. Try it. These are the people where our relationship is in breakdown. There is a slight uncomfortable feeling - a BEEP! - when we think of them.
- When we are conscious of using either Point Attention or Field Attention, we can say that we are Present.

Part 2: (30 min)

- We will now use the ITERATIVE IMAGINATION method for learning about Centering and Attention.
- Pass out one tennis ball and one length of rope to each person.
- Please take five minutes to individually create a Centering and Attention exercise using these materials. Please begin.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please find a partner. Explain your exercises to them and have them do the exercises.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please stop. Please find another partner.
- The 2 of you now you have 5 minutes to create a Centering exercise and an Attention exercise (either Point or Field Attention) using both people, 6 tennis balls and two ropes. Please begin.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please stop. Please pair up with another team of 2. Explain your exercises to them and have them do the exercises.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please stop. Please find a different team of 2. Please take the next 5 minutes to create a Centering exercise and an Attention exercise (either Point or Field attention) using all 4 people, all 12 tennis balls and 4 pieces of rope. Please begin.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please stop.
- Please pair up with another team of 4. Explain your exercises to them and have them do your exercises.
- (After 5 minutes)
- Please stop.

Part 3: (10 min)

- Please put your tennis balls and ropes back into this bag.
- Go find your original Partner A and Partner B for this exercise.
- Partner B, your job is to stand on one foot, place your attention on the tip of your finger, and not to fall over, look anywhere else, or laugh.
- Partner A, your job is to do everything you can to distract Partner B's attention from their finger and to get them ungrounded, off center and out of balance. It is not okay to physically touch them. Anything else is okay.
- (After 3 minutes) Okay, please stop.
- Rotate. Partner A, it is your turn to stand on one foot and place your attention on the tip of your finger. Partner B it is your turn to get them ungrounded, off center and out of balance. No touching. Anything else is okay.
- Please begin.
- (After 3 minutes) Okay, please stop.

Part 4: (15 min)

Do PROBLEMS Process (tennis balls tossed at individuals standing against a wall)

DEBRIEF:

Check-in with participants.