



Podcast 18

How to get along with another instructor/colleagues?

How to decide whether to work with a co-trainer or on your own? Does it make sense to divide work? How to make it easy for both partners?

Working in pairs has two sides. People often focus on the side on which they feel support from each other: they feel it is easier to work together; because -

- the responsibility is shared
- one partner can focus on the group process another one on the structure and exercises;
- some participants will feel better with one of the instructors, while others with the other one

As a team it can be easier to establish safety and integrate the group than as an individual. If the group process is intense and long you have more perspectives and it is easier to keep your energy because you are not busy with the group at all moments.

Two trainers can divide the responsibility, learn from differences, develop in competencies where their partner is stronger. There is a lot to say for cooperation! However, as with almost everything, a good cooperation is not a given but a result of systematic work and self-reflection.

Let us look at an example. Imagine a group of people attending a 3-day dancing session, led by two trainers. It is a group of adults (25-55 years old). About one third of the group is used to talk about their emotions in a group setting, there is one third very shy joining the dance class because this is the only way for them to connect to people (they have difficulties in talking about themselves, but they can connect via movement). The last third of the group wants to play and move, some of them are in a personal crisis. One of the trainers— let's call her Tina - is used to work with group dynamics, discussing emotions with participants, and giving space to group members as needed. The other one is Ola. Her philosophy is "dance is physicality not emotions", she has a background in sports, used to work in a big company, and has a very busy daily routine. When Tina senses a difficult moment in the group, she stops the movement and asks for a round of reflections on how everybody is feeling. In the silence following, while group members are thinking about what to say, Ola cracks a joke about emotions. Can you imagine how that effects the group?

It can be demanding to work together when people do not know each other and each other's work methods and preferences. If I do not understand my partner's intentions – I can easily take attention away from the task the group has already focused on. Ola tried to be helpful - she interpreted the silence following Tina's question as something that needed to be solved and she felt responsible. Tina used a tool that was well known to her, but not to her co-trainer, resulting in tension in their work. They have not clarified with each other beforehand how they plan to act when one of them notices an emotionally difficult situation, and they might not have had a good agreement on the scope of this three-day program. Most probably Ola needs to understand better her reactions to the emotions in the group.





Working with another trainer has many challenges beyond a mutual agreement in methods and scope: for example transferring leadership from one person to the other in the group is very important to master.

Working together requires a lot of attentiveness and withdrawal of individual preferences on behalf of the group. The trainers need to work on a common group leader identity which includes them both.

Success for the pair of trainers happens in preparation of the script/scenario of the workshop and preparation of themselves to work together.

Here are a few tips for a better cooperation than in the example of Ola and Tina:

Here are some possible ways to agree on dividing up tasks

- They can take turns with strictly defined roles - in each turn one is leading the group, the other is an observer or participant-observer. They can specify timespans for leading (ex. switching roles every two hours)
- Assign and then develop specific parts of the program: One person leads the exercise and discussion, another one summarizes or gives a presentation

If the process cannot be described with a program-type structure, you can also:

- divided the roles: one person is initiating the process, another is leading the process

Or changed by turns: after one process has finished one trainer leads exercise, discussion, summarizing, application and afterwards the other person is taking the leadership.

You can use several of these approaches, as long as you are clear to both of you and you have an understanding of the process.

It is also important to discuss what do you expect from each other when the other is in a supporting role and a part of the process. What do you expect them to do or not to do?

Take quality time to know each other and each other's preferences and values. Discuss all difficulties that you think may appear. Prepare the script of exercise /scenario together. Make sure you understand the aim of your partner's part.

Ask yourself and your partner:

- How can I contribute to our team?
- What do I need from you?
- What are my concerns about working together?
- What am I looking forward to in our work?

Discuss these questions openly and honestly with each other. Be aware if you are not feeling comfortable about being honest and reflect on the possible reasons. Is this something you need to work on, or is this something in your cooperation in the here and now that might cause this unease?.



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Do your best to hear the answers of your partner as information, and not as judgment.. Remember your honest and open cooperation will have benefits for the group.

Have fun cooperating and learning from each other or/and feel free to work on your own 😊

You can find additional materials at:
<https://wellsol.eu/empact>



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