

Dr Richard Bolstad and Margot Hamblett

Transforming Conflict In Training

As a trainer, I know that training brings me many of the most moving, inspiring experiences I will ever have. Experiences where I feel that I have touched the hearts of course participants and changed their lives. To get those experiences, I invest enormous energy, and I take risks with my own heart. At times I reveal some of my most precious experiences, I unfurl the newly formed wings of my most sacred dreams, I teach all that I know and allow people to see the edges of what I am. And in that state of vulnerability, conflict and criticism can seem unbelievably brutal; can leave me wondering if I want to face another training ever again. . . .

As a student, I know that training has the potential to open the world for me. Some of the greatest changes in my life have been born in the marvellous nest that training provides. Training can be like accelerated living; a year of planning, dreaming, discovering, and connecting, packed into a single week. To get those experiences, I commit myself to time and energy, and I take risks with my heart. I reveal my hopes, my uncertainties, my growing edges. Criticism, coercion and teaching that doesn't meet my anticipation can seem to have discarded or even crushed that trust. . . .

Robert Dilts summarizes this more succinctly: "The basic problem space of presenting relates to managing the interaction between the presenter and the audience in order to achieve the desired goals of the presentation" (Dilts, 1994, p.17). This article shares our experience as trainers in finding a path which creates co-operation in the training room. To us, there is nothing more important for a trainer to learn. Everything else is footnotes, and this is the main text of any training manual. Interestingly, though, almost everything in this article we learned by "not doing" at some time – by making "mistakes". Very little of what now seems to us crucial "common sense" was written in any book on training. So in this article we'll share with you not only some of