

# WORKSHOP ON INNER READINESS DURING TC1 IN SANTA SEVERA

Written by Angelica Paci  
and Mario D'Agostino



This workshop was designed and carried out in order to explore how our theory on inner readiness could be put into practice through educational activities. The workshop derives from a series of activities that have been trialled by some of the partners of the project. It was run for the first time in February 2016 during the second training event of project REFLECT at Santa Severa (Italy).

## AIM OF THE WORKSHOP

The aim of the workshop is to clarify the meaning of inner readiness and to let people experience how it is possible to increase the possibility to be 'inner ready' through dynamic activities and reflective practice. The workshop intends to explore how, by directing our structure of attention, we can increase the possibility to become more aware of:

- our context of action
- our personal resources (or to what extent we own the competence)
- our reaction habits.

This condition of awareness enables us to increase the possibility to be 'inner ready' to act in a specific time and space (in the here-and-now).

## The different steps of the workshop are organised taking into account that:

- Inner readiness is the ability to express a personal potential in a specific time and space or, concretely, in the "here-and-now". One of the main factors influencing inner readiness is a connecting quality of our nature. By "connecting quality" we mean our ability to connect our owned competences with a specific context and with our reaction habits empowering us to act now, in a specific time and space.
- Inner readiness cannot be trained, as it is a connecting quality of our nature therefore permanently residing in us. However, we can increase the possibilities to be 'inner ready' through reflective practices that contribute in making us more aware.

The workshop is organised in different phases:

1. To run an activity that allows participants to be in touch with themselves, the others and the context. These three elements for us constitute the CONTEXT OF ACTION.
2. To provide participants with tools for becoming aware of their level of listening to themselves, the others and the situation.

3. A challenging, dynamic activity for the group to practice their level of listening.
4. A moment during the group activity where participants stop and reflect in action, to reflect on their way of listening in order to become more aware of their reaction habits and their sources of energy.
5. Providing an opportunity to accomplish the task by applying the participants' insights after having reflected.
6. To check with participants if the workshop:
  - supported them in being in contact with their inner source and in being more aware about themselves in the here-and-now
  - supported them by providing a tool (the 4 levels of listening) to align the intelligences of 'the brain, the heart and the belly' for acting in a coherent and authentic way.

Time frame: approximately 3 hours

Group size: 10 participants

Group type: Trainers and teachers that are participants and partners of the Erasmus+ Reflect project

STEP	WHAT WE DID	OBJECTIVE	BACKGROUND THEORY AND/OR INSPIRING PRACTICE/S	TIME	WHERE	FEEDBACK FROM PAX
1	<p>Participants are invited to explore their context of action in what we call "The Village".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The external context</li> <li>▪ The people around them</li> <li>▪ Themselves</li> </ul> <p>During the activity they are invited either to walk, stand still or sit in a given space. They are invited to explore the context of action by using the three possibilities mentioned above and by practicing them alone or in the proximity of somebody else. This means participants can walk, stand or sit next to someone else, but they can't obstruct the others. After approximately 10 minutes, participants are invited to introduce a new ritual in the Village and to greet anybody they encounter by chance as they move around. They are asked to salute the encountered person by stopping in front of her/him, bow down by slightly inclining their head and shoulders, coming back up and stopping for a moment to look the other person in the eyes, in order to acknowledge and appreciate the person.</p>	<p>Allow learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ perceive, sense and observe the context of action with new eyes</li> <li>▪ become more concentrated in the here-and-now and more focused on the context of action.</li> </ul>	<p>For this stage we used an activity inspired by "The Village", a practice of social presencing theatre developed under the leadership of Arawana Hayashi for the Presencing Institute and is meant to enhance the application of Theory U.</p> <p>The true movements of the body are meant to celebrate the "not knowing", to cut through the usual and arise from an arena that is bigger than our own small, personal perspective, as it comes from an awareness of the "field" in which we are acting.</p>	30 min	Outdoor (it could also be done indoor)	
2	<p>Participants are invited to reflect on what has happened for them during the activity. We ask them what they have noticed about the context around them and about themselves and what resonates in them the most.</p>	<p>Allow learners to notice their 'structure of attention' (and the field from which they are operating</p>	Reflection practice (after action)	20 min	Indoor	<p>They said that they have noticed things around them, in people and in themselves that they had not noticed before the activity.</p>
3	<p>Introduce the 4 levels of listening from Theory U by Otto Scharmer</p>	<p>Highlight the importance of noticing the field of action and explain how the structure of our attention affects the different ways of listening and being present to oneself and the others.</p> <p>See template and explanation below for an overview of the 4 levels of listening.</p>	<p>The 4 levels of listening from Theory U by Otto Scharmer ("Addressing the blind spot of our time" – An executive summary of the new book by Otto Scharmer "Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges". <a href="http://www.presencing.com">www.presencing.com</a>)</p>	25 min	Indoor	<p>They said: "Interesting tool to read our own way of listening to ourselves, to others and to the context of action".</p>

↓

STEP	WHAT WE DID	OBJECTIVE	BACKGROUND THEORY AND/OR INSPIRING PRACTICE/S	TIME	WHERE	FEEDBACK FROM PAX
4	<p>Participants are invited to challenge themselves as a group by having to achieve a common task.</p> <p>Participants had to go as a group from one side to the other of a rope placed on the ground. Everybody's feet had to touch the ground at the same time on the other side of the rope.</p>	Provide learners with a common experience	Low Ropes activity usually used in experiential learning programmes	10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	
5	Participants are stopped in the middle of the action and are invited to take note of their level of listening and what voice (whether judgment, cynicism or fear) was hindering them from shifting towards generative listening.	Create a moment of stillness, during which learners can focus their attention on what is the context around them (the task to be achieved, the other group members and the resources available). What are their reaction habits to stimuli coming from outside and inside and what are the personal resources they were activating?	This is a practice of reflection inspired by Donald Schön's 1983 book. The Reflective Practitioner and other authors such as John Dewey.	5-10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	Participants feel they are much more aware of what is happening in them and around them. Most of them reveal that after that moment of stillness and reflection, they are more inclined to express their potential in that specific moment and context through an action, no matter what the result is going to be.
6	Participants are invited to continue the activity until time allocated for accomplishing the task has come to an end.	Allow participants to step into action again after the pause for reflection. Allow participants to engage in the action with a different level of awareness in order to express their potential.	Our reflected practices show us that awareness of context, reaction habits and personal resources can increase the possibility for inner readiness.	10 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	
7	Introduce our concept of inner readiness.	Inform participants about the background theory of inner readiness.		20 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	
8	Participants are invited to reflect at a meta-level on their awareness and actions after reflection.	Investigate if the different steps of the workshop support participants to increase their level of awareness and if this increased awareness enables them to be 'inner ready', thus to express their potential in the here-and-now moment.		40 min	Indoor (it can also be done outdoor)	

To summarise what the workshop was about, here follows a template that shows what is needed, how we can create a reflective environment where individuals can become more aware and be empowered for being ready to act out their potential.

WHAT WE NEED	WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
To be in contact with our inner source of energy being aware of ourselves in the here-and-now.	By letting go of the 3 voices (voice of judgement, cynicism and fear) that impede listening in a generative way	To know the 4 levels of listening by Otto Scharmer (Theory U)
To feel and to be connected with the context of action	By opening our mind, our heart and our will	Reflection in action, mindfulness and meditation can support this stage
To behave/act in a coherent and authentic way	Connecting our heart, mind and will	Sensing, listening to the deeper source from which we are functioning, letting go of the non-essential aspects of the self, letting the new come in and the transformation of the old and follow the flow.

## THE 4 LEVELS OF LISTENING

FIELD	MICRO	MESO
Structure of attention	THINKING (individual)	CONVERSING (group)
<i>Field 1:</i> Operating from the old me-world	<i>Listening 1:</i> Downloading habits of thought	<i>Downloading:</i> Talking nicely, politeness rule-re-enacting
<i>Field 2:</i> Operating from the current it-world	<i>Listening 2:</i> Factual, object-focused	<i>Debate:</i> Talking tough, rule-revealing
<i>Field 3:</i> Operating from current you-world	<i>Listening 3:</i> Empathetic listening	<i>Dialogue:</i> Enquiry, rule-reflecting
<i>Field 4:</i> Operating from the highest future possibility that is wanting to emerge	<i>Listening 4:</i> Generative listening	<i>Dialogue:</i> Collective creativity, flow rule-generating

In order to move from a reactive Field 1 or 2 to a generative Field 3 or 4 response, we must embark on a journey and move along by letting go of our three enemies:

- the voice of judgment that is the habit of judging based on past experience
- the voice of cynicism that is the incapability of opening one's heart
- the voice of fear that is the fear of the unknown.

The first movement is to "observe, observe, observe." It means to stop downloading and start listening. It means to stop our habitual ways of operating and immerse ourselves in the places that have the most potential, the places that matter most to the situation we are dealing with. Observation needs an open mind by suspending our voice of judgment (VOJ). That means opening up a new space of enquiry and wonder. Without suspending that Voj, attempts to get inside the places of most potential will be futile.

The second movement is referred to as “retreat and reflect: allow the inner knowing to emerge.” Go to the inner place of stillness where knowing comes to the surface. We listen to everything we learned during the “observe, observe,” phase and we heed what wants to emerge. We pay particular attention to our own role and journey.

In order to connect to the deeper forces of change through opening our heart, we should open up and deal with the resistance of thought, emotion, and will; it is about intentionally reintegrating the intelligence of the head, the heart, and the hand in the context of practical application.

The third movement is about “acting in an instant.” This means to prototype the new, in order to explore the future, by doing.

Similar to the inner enemies (voice of judgment, voice of cynicism and voice of fear), there are the three old methods of operating: executing without improvisation and mindfulness (reactive action); endless reflection without a will to act (analysis paralysis); and talking without a connection to source and action (blah-blah). These three enemies share the same structural feature. Instead of balancing the intelligence of the head, heart, and hand, one of the three dominates: the will in mindless action, the head in endless reflection, the heart in endless networking. Connecting to one’s best future possibility and creating powerful breakthrough ideas requires learning to access the intelligence of the heart and the hand—not just the intelligence of the head. (Extract from the Executive summary of Otto Scharmer’s book: Theory U: leading from the future as it emerges).

## INSPIRING THEORIES AND PRACTICES FOR PLANNING A WORKSHOP

One of the theories we find very inspiring in terms of raising awareness is Theory U by Otto Scharmer (2009), at the core of which is the hypothesis that the quality of our actions is a function of the quality of the awareness we bring to those actions. By increasing awareness and letting go of preconceptions, we tap into our wiser self and into the greatest potential of a situation. Awareness gives us leverage. It gives birth to insight, innovation, and skilful action.

The other theory and practice that we find very inspiring is Mindfulness, a way of beginning to become more attentive to the present moment, to the actuality of being alive and participating in that actively being alive. A way of being engaged, deeply connected and tapping into one’s own inner resource, that we have simply by virtue of being humans. Mindfulness is the awareness that rises when we pay attention to purpose, in the present moment in a non-judgmental way. It’s not some fixed static state. It’s very alive when it’s informed by awareness. By practising mindfulness, we can more skilfully meet those moments of being out of balance, as it reveals to us our habits and our patterns. That kind of understanding leads to changes in the way we handle the situation.

There are three elements for mindfulness:

- Attention - choosing to be awake in each moment of our being alive.
- Intention - the choice to do that. It’s our purposeful choice.
- Attitude - the open curiosity that we bring to what we are aware of in the moment.

The last theory we referred to is Donald Schön’s ideas on the reflective practitioner (1983), that’s to say thinking about or reflecting on what we do. It is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience, in the sense of: ‘we think about what we do in action and also on action’, what happens and decide from that what we would do differently next time. Thinking about what is happening or has happened is part of being human. However, the difference between casual ‘thinking’ and ‘reflective practice’ is that reflective practice requires a conscious effort to think about events, and develop insights from them. Reflective practices refocus our thinking on our existing knowledge and help generate new knowledge and ideas. As a result, we may modify our actions, behaviour and learning needs.

**REFERENCES:**

- Dewey John (2012). *The Relation of Theory to Practice in the Education of Teachers*. Kindle Edition
- Dewey John (1997). *Experience and Education*. Free Press
- Kabat-Zinn Jon (2005). *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. Paperback
- Scharmer Otto (2009). *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges* - Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Schön Donald (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner : how professionals think in action*. Basic Books