



Congruence, authenticity, discipline

by a group facilitator

We had started that morning with some pretty standard processes for this type of meeting, about the importance of taking personal responsibility and limiting blame, justification, avoidance and denial. We had agreed that congruence, authenticity and discipline were to be key touchstones for our work together. Yet at that moment they were far from my mind. I was too busy looking at the group, smiling on the outside but inside losing confidence as my fear and anxiety grew. I was responsible for the session, yet it was not going well. Several senior members were clearly uninterested and unhappy. Others were aware that things weren't right but were putting on a brave face – some smiling at me as if to try to make it OK. It wasn't! It wasn't a disaster zone, but it lacked the edge and power that I wanted to be a hallmark of this work.

The shift happened when I stopped focusing on my concerns and anxiety. Instead, I just looked at the group and created a space for someone to speak, for something to happen.

'This is not working for me,' someone finally said.

'In what way?' I asked, instantly feeling better because I'd heard a real statement of what was happening.

'Well, it may just be me, but I am not feeling connected to what we are trying to achieve. Sorry to disrupt the process...'

'You have not disrupted the process,' I said. 'In fact you may have brought it back on track. What's not working?'

We then spent 40 minutes hearing from each person about where they were at, what was working and what was missing. In the process, the group created a new level of honesty and challenge.

We were also able to begin to discuss where the responsibility lay for each person's experience. In some cases it was in the way I was running the workshop – and mostly I felt freer to be able to change this. In other cases it lay in people's personal style and preconceptions – and they challenged each other to shift their mindset and involvement.

The meeting improved dramatically, as did the future workings of the group. I think this was because we had turned congruence, authenticity and discipline from a weak commitment to a strong action and a lived experience.

By being truthful one person had created space for the others to explore what was really happening. This new level of trust made all the difference.

