

# Ten Lessons in *Threeing* Practice

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## Organizing the Ten Lessons

This practice section provides a sequence of three person exercises. The sequence is designed to enable your group to gain a working understanding of the three person solution and be able to apply this solution. The ten lessons are organized around the device of the tricolor talking stick. The nonverbal yoga of relationships, based on a diagram of the relational circuit, is presented in a separate practice section below.

These ten lessons enable you to teach a group under your authority or to initiate a peer group. Each lesson is ninety minutes long. Depending on the time available and the pacing of the group, the ninety minutes could extend to two hours. An hour of preparation is required for each lesson from each participant. Here is a list of the lessons.

1. Profiling Skills and the Talking Stick
2. Diagnosing Relational Problems
3. Dividing the Tasks
4. Making Decisions
5. Reading Charles Peirce
6. Imitating Sherlock Holmes

7. Cultivating Creativity
8. Solving Problems
9. Planning to Three
10. Exploring the Yoga of *Threeing*

Lessons one through four are essential. Lessons five through eight are optional, but highly desirable. Lessons nine and ten guide you in making a transition from this course to an ongoing use of *Threeing*. After fifteen to twenty hours for the full course, another ninety minutes to two hours could be added on for each member of the group. Each member would use the time to make an explicit proposal to apply *Threeing* to the group itself or to another group. The group would offer feedback on the proposal using the Talking Stick Protocols.

This course is organized for maximum flexibility.

- \* These ten lessons could serve as the basis of a college level course over a semester. Resources are cited after each lesson for those who wish to go deeper.
- \* Given proper preparation by participants, the first four essential lessons could be offered in a day long workshop and the remaining optional lessons woven into subsequent on the job training.
- \* The first eight lessons, including preparation, could be compressed into a three-day weekend.
- \* The lessons are sequenced so they can work well in pairs. In other words, if you wanted to do three hours a day for five

days, lessons one and two fit together, three and four, five and six, seven and eight, and nine and ten.

- \* The ten lessons, including preparation and individual sessions, could be used to organize a four-day intensive.

While engaging in three roles constitutes the core of the program, a fourth person is recommended to facilitate learning the roles. With four people, participants can take turns as the fourth person. They can, in effect, form a learning group of peer teachers. Groups that are multiples of four, with eight, twelve or more members, offer participants more variety and should be configured, whenever possible.

## **As an Authority Over Three or More**

As an authority over a group, you obviously already have your personal style of leadership. Digesting this book as an individual will enable you to think about how *Threeing* might be integrated into your style and your context. Reviewing chapters five and six in the theory section is advised. The various suggestions for group of different sizes discussed below should also be reviewed to help you adapt *Threeing* for your own situation. Much of the material will transform rather easily. Some examples of how *Threeing* has been adapted will be suggestive.

- A fourth grade science teacher developed an entire curriculum in which she adapted the three roles for scientific research. She organized the students in teams of three. The initiating student proposed an idea or hypotheses, the respondent enacted an experiment to test the hypothesis and the mediator reviewed the hypothesis in terms of the experiment and presented the group's findings to the whole class.
- A seventh grade teacher developed a story telling curriculum in which character was linked to the first role, conflict to the second role and plot to the third role.
- A new magazine was divided it into four sections, each with its own editor. The group used the decision making process based on *Threeing* (described below) to make coordinated editorial decisions. It worked.
- A professor of architecture used some of the exercises described below to involve all her students in the presentation and discussion of buildings from an environmental point of view.
- A dance choreographer and troupe leader integrated the nonverbal practice of *Threeing* into some of her pieces.

You know your context better than anyone. You must make judgments as to how to adapt *Threeing* to your context.

## **Organizing Participants as a Teaching Authority**

As a person in a position of trust -- of authority -- you must take responsibility for combining and recombining your group into teams of

three or four. One way to do this is to ask everybody in the group to take the Performance Profile (See additional resources section of Earthscore site) and then combine the members of the group according to how their skill sets complement each other. After scoring the profile, ask all members of the group to go to three separate corners of the room according to their strongest skill set. Then balance the group by asking the 'extras' in each corner to go to the fourth corner. You may also have to ask some members to go to a corner that matches their second skill set. Assure everybody that they will play all roles. When you have an equal number of people in each corner, let them count off around the room, one to four. As groups of four they can then start the exercises. Use any odd person out as an observer and/or a substitute. It is a good idea to have some 'extras' in case people are absent or opt out of the process. Depending on your situation, you might want to recombine the groups periodically using both the Performance Profile and your own sense of who can best work together. Understanding the various peer combinations, presented below, will also help you think through options for recombining participants.

## **As an Administrative Authority**

If you are in a position of administrative authority, you might invite three subordinates of equal rank to learn *Threeing* so they can function as a team of advisors for you. In effect, you would be the fourth person. While substituting a proxy as a fourth party during the learning process would not be as effective in terms of developing working dynamics with your advisors, if you wish, you can take this

option. In actual decision making situations, you would act as the fourth person. As the team developed competency, you might want to delegate certain decision making to them. You could also modify the decision making process to fit your situation. In such administrative situations, a clear and fair division of tasks and responsibilities (see below) is important. Each member of the three-person groups should be assigned a prime domain that coincides with their skills as shown by the Performance Profile.

### **As a Facilitator**

As a facilitator of *Threeing*, obviously, healthy facilitation skills, such as connecting with the participants and patience, are required. Moreover, you need an in-depth understanding of this book. The Performance Profile and the sketch of your experience with two other people, given in the first two lessons, should be worked through on your own before the course. This will give you a reference for orchestrating the experience of participants with this material. Besides knowing yourself and understanding the three person solution, you must also, as much as possible, respect the choices of participants and encourage them to honor their own choices. *Threeing* will not work as a forced practice. Choice is constantly renewed by the participants so if you do not respect their right to choose, you will undercut your own efforts.

### **As a Peer Initiating *Threeing***

*Threeing* is something you learn. You cannot play chess with someone who does not know the rules. It makes no sense to try to practice

*Threeing* with people who have not learned to *Three*. You will only expose yourself to emotional confusion. Mark a clear line between those who know and those who don't and respect the transition. I recall once in the excitement of having understood *Threeing*, getting together with two male friend and acting like they knew *Threeing*. What happened was that they sensed my vulnerability and went into a two against one mode. They ganged up on me and shredded me emotionally, as only rival males can do with each other. In normal circumstances my defenses would be up. *Threeing* made me vulnerable. Only practice with those who know how. When there is no trustworthy authority to take responsibility for the group dynamics of *Threeing*, you must be especially alert to the well being of your peers. If you intend to do both verbal and nonverbal *Threeing* with peers who are not trained in nonverbal work such as dancers, secure a reliable measure of trust with the Tricolor Talking Stick before moving to the nonverbal yoga of *Threeing*.

In the selection of people to work with, you are exposing yourself to emotional risk. Relationships are very important to us. We take them seriously. After reading this book and thinking about what is presented, I believe you will agree that the form of *Threeing* itself is trustworthy. However, the people you practice with must also be worthy of trust. Be cautious. Trust yourself. Don't be afraid to say "No" to an invitation to *Three* with someone you do not trust. When you initiate *Threeing*, take care to select people whom you trust or feel you can come to trust.

Depending on your situation, you might use *Threeing* effectively to start and sustain a group that has a purpose other than *Threeing* itself. Often with a new group the good feelings last for a while and then interpersonal difficulties arise and split the group. With the practice of *Threeing* you can grow the group in any number of ways without suffering splits. For example, you could begin by inviting a group of three to work with you. Along the lines described above for administrators, they might begin by functioning as an advisory group. As, in your judgment, they became competent to handle certain things you could then delegate that authority to them. Once they secured a working understanding of *Threeing* and their responsibilities, each person could, in turn, invite two or three people to work with them and delegate authority as appropriate. Each of the nine could each invite two more people. The organization could grow exponentially.

If you want to work with peers, the simplest approach is to pass this book around and see if you get any takers. You might spark the interest of your peers by observing how the two against one dynamics work in your group. (Chapter 1). One playful way to put these dynamics in high relief is to try to enact a practice that appears in parts of China. When one person asks another a question in the presence of a third person, the one answering the question speaks as if the third person had asked the question, so as not to exclude that third person.

You need to make sure that everybody is willing to work with everybody else. If you invite three people to work with you who do not know each other or have hidden antagonisms, you are risking the

possibility that natural dislikes will arise and undo your group. Here is a formal peer selection process that minimizes that risk.

As the initiator of a peer group, invite one person to work with you. Once that person has agreed to work with you, let them choose someone else, subject to your agreement. Both of you then invite that third person. Once that third person is in agreement, let him or her nominate a fourth person, subject to the approval of you and the other member of the group. Given you both support the choice, let that fourth person be recruited by all of you. By letting each member of the group have a say about every other member of the group, you ensure that there is sufficient commitment to sustain the learning of *Threeing* as the subsequent group effort.

### **As One of Four**

As mentioned, the exercises are formatted for optimal use by four people. As the person who started the program, you will need to release your natural authority, gradually, to the whole group. Obviously, you want to hold it together until it has a life of its own, but you do not want to destroy it by dominating it. This calls for a series of judgments on your part. Aided by the comments from your selected peers, these judgments should not be hard to make.

### **As One of Five**

With a fifth person in the loop, you need some extra roles. Members of the group should take turns playing these extra roles. One extra role is simply being ready to fill in if someone cannot make a meeting.

Another is as an advocate for the fourth person as that person interacts with the three others. For example, in a given exercise, the fourth person might make a proposal to the three for their feedback. Their feedback could overwhelm the proposal maker. In such an instance the fifth person can act as the proposal maker's advocate. Another role a fifth person can play is to act as an observer for the whole session and provide general commentary at the end of the session.

### **As One of Six**

With six people, there are twenty different three-person combinations possible. Each person would have the opportunity to practice *Threeing* as part of ten different combinations. When three needs a fourth person, they can borrow that person from the other group of three. Below is a schema of the ten combinations. If you wish to work with these combinations simply assign one letter, ABCDE or F, to each person in the group of six. Each week, going down the list, use a different combination. When the ten combinations are exhausted, repeat the sequence.

ABC

ABD

ABE

ABF

ACD

ACE

DEF

CEF

CDF

CDE

EFB

BDF

ACF  
ADF  
ADE  
AEF

BDE  
BCE  
BCF  
BCD

### **As One of Seven or More**

With seven or more you simply break into smaller groups of three, four or five depending on the number of participants and the exercises involved. Periodically, it is a good idea to recombine participants so that cliques do not develop. It also makes sense to have regular open discussions about the process.

We move now to Lesson One of the short course for verbal *Threeing*.