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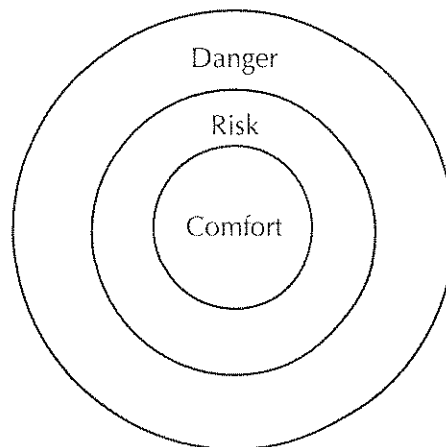
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Zones of Comfort, Risk and Danger: Constructing Your Zone Map

The Zones Exercise comes from an unknown source (to me) within the NSRF organization. I first experienced it at the Fall, 2000, Critical Friends Group Symposium in Boca Raton, Florida. I have found the exercise useful and have tried to make notes for others. I hope the originator will claim the invention, and that others will add to this useful exercise as they discover new applications. Marylyn Wentworth, January, 2001.

1. Draw a diagram of concentric circles in the following manner:
 - a. The middle circle is Comfort, the second is Risk, the third is Danger.
 - b. Consider the various aspects of your work (as a CFG Coach, for example). Think about the aspects that feel really comfortable to you, those that feel like there is some risk involved, but generally positive, and those aspects that you know get your hackles up, make you feel defensive, cloud your judgment, make you want to retreat.
 - c. Decide on the size of each Zone based on your consideration. Do you work a lot in your Comfort Zone, your Risk Zone? Do you work only a little in your Danger Zone? Make the size of the Zones reflect the quantity of time you work there.
2. Think about the different activities you do and/or affective domains in which you work (i.e. facilitating groups, leading protocols, designing meetings, guiding peer observation, responding to conflicts between group members...). Make a list if it helps.
3. Put each activity or affective domain into the Zone that best represents your sense of relative Comfort, Risk or Danger.



Observations on the Zones

1. **The Comfort Zone** is usually a place where we feel at ease, with no tension, have a good grip on the topic, like to hear from others about the topic, know how to navigate occasional rough spots with ease. It is also a place to retreat to from the Danger Zone. For example, one of your Danger Zone aspects may be when people start disagreeing with passion and even disrespect. You might find that when that happens you retreat into your Comfort aspect of listening and not intervening, or even find a way to divert the conversation to a topic that is in your Comfort Zone.
2. **The Risk Zone** is the most fertile place for learning. It is where most people are willing to take some risks, not know everything, or sometimes not know anything at all, but clearly know they want to learn and will take the risks necessary to do so. It is where people open up to other people with curiosity and interest, and where they will consider options or ideas they haven't thought of before.
3. **Generally it is not a good idea to work from either your own Danger Zone or anyone else's.** That area is so full of defenses, fears, red-lights, desire for escape, etc, that it requires too much energy and time to accomplish anything from that Zone. The best way to work when you find yourself there is to own that it is a Danger Zone and work on some strategies to move into the Risk Zone (either on your own or with colleagues).

For example, if I feel my anger rising and my body getting rigid when someone says it's time we really clamped down on standardized tests and taught to them right now before the kids failed any more and it is suggested that our CFG should work in that direction as our main focus, I recognize the signs of being in my Danger Zone and know I probably won't be rational when I speak. Therefore I need a strategy. In this case, my strategy will be to ask calmly, "What are the advantages for the students if we do that? What are the advantages for teaching and learning? What are the disadvantages?" Then I have to listen and list. I can't trust myself to do more than ask questions until I become more rational and this isn't such a high level Danger Zone for me.

How to Apply the Zones Productively: Connection to Dilemmas





The Consultancy

1. Review your Zone Map and select a dilemma represented there.
2. Make some notes to give more detail to the dilemma. Notice what Zone the dilemma appears in, or if it is a complex dilemma and has aspects in several Zones.
3. Break into triads and plan your order and time for three Consultancies.
4. As you present your dilemma, use your Zone Map as a reference for the group. They may find fertile ground for probing questions or feedback in your Map, and can see how your dilemma relates to other aspects of your work.

Alternative to the Consultancy

1. Write a dilemma about your work before you come to the Zones Workshop.
2. After you have done the Zones Map, divide into triads.
3. Take turns reading your dilemmas aloud to each other.

4. Discuss the following questions for each person (20 minutes each):
 - a. How does your dilemma relate to your Zone Map? What Zone(s) is the dilemma happening in for you? For others related to your dilemma?
 - b. Are you working in your Danger Zone? Someone else's? Do you need to know about other people's Danger Zones?
 - c. If your dilemma is in your Danger Zone (or someone else's), how can you move those issues into a Risk or Comfort Zone? How might this movement contribute to solving the dilemma?
 - d. What would the other people who contribute to or are affected by your dilemma say about your dilemma?

Facilitation Difficulty:   Varies by need: 15-30 min.  Any size, with modifications for large groups*  No preconference

Purpose — To silently reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group. Because Chalk Talk is done in silence, it gives groups a change of pace, encourages thoughtful contemplation, and reduces the risk often felt in verbal conversations. A Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It can solve vexing problems, reveal how much a group knows about a topic, get an entire project planned, or give a committee lots of information without any verbal sparring. It can be an unforgettable experience. Students love it — it's the quietest they'll ever be!

***Group size** — See note after protocol for recommendations for large groups

Preparation — Large chalk board and chalk, or whiteboard and markers, or many pieces of chart paper taped together on the wall and markers. Ideally, write your question or topic in the center of the space but do not reveal it until after the setup.

Facilitation tips — During the protocol, your job is to remind everyone to stay silent and active. Do not allow them to return to their seats until the debrief (exempting those who are physically unable to stand). You may also write your own comments to push participants' thinking in new directions.

Steps:

- 1. Setup** — Explain that Chalk Talk is a silent activity that gets everyone out their seats for the duration of the protocol. No one may talk at all, nobody should go sit down until prompted, and all "comments" should be written on the boards/papers instead of being spoken. When not writing, participants should be standing back from the wall, reading each other's comments and allowing others space to write. (5 min.) They may respond to comments by:
 - Adding related or contrasting thoughts alongside an existing comment
 - Drawing a line connecting two similar comments
 - Adding exclamations, stars, smiley faces, +1s, or other pictographs to a comment
 - Drawing a picture that symbolizes what they are thinking or feeling
- 2. Question** — If you were unable to prep the room and pre-write the question(-s), do so now, in the center of the board, and draw a large circle around it for emphasis. (1 min.) Sample questions:
 - *What did you learn today?*
 - *So What? Or Now What?*
 - *What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?*
 - *How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in the community?*
 - *How can we keep the noise level down in this room?*
 - *What does the scheduling committee need to know?*

- *What do you know about Croatia?*
 - *How are decimals used in the world?*
3. **Distribute** — Hand out pieces of chalk or markers to everyone, or place many pieces of chalk/markers at the boards and hand chalk/markers to several random participants to get the ball rolling. (2 min.)
 4. **“Talk”** — Announce to the group that, *“The Chalk Talk is now open!”* Participants write as they feel moved. Chalk Talks tend to begin and end like corn popping. A few people will start writing at first. Then, more and more people will join until there is a flurry of activity for a time. Gradually, fewer and fewer people will contribute until there will only be one or two writing at a time. There are likely to be some pauses in writing activity. Breaks for reading and reflection are natural, so allow wait time before deciding it is over. When it’s done, it’s done! Invite everyone to return to their seats for the debrief. (10-15 min.)
 5. **Debrief and reflect** —
 - *What did you notice about the comments? Anything surprising? Any patterns?*
 - *Why did we do this activity in silence?*
 - *What, if any, next steps should be taken?*
 - *What did you think of the activity? What worked, what didn’t?*
 - *How might you use this in your work?*
 6. ***Big group option** — One Chalk Talk works well with up to 15 people. If you have a larger group, setup separate (adjacent or parallel) walls with different questions, one per 15 participants (e.g., two chalk talks for 16-30 people, three chalk talks for 31-45, etc.). Participants can then feel free to comment silently on any of the walls, reading and writing at will. If you have more than one Chalk Talk going simultaneously, expect to increase your time accordingly to allow for more interaction. Example questions for a multiple Chalk Talk experience:
 - *What is experiential learning?*
 - *What are the benefits of experiential learning?*
 - *What are the obstacles around incorporating experiential learning into our curriculum?*
 - *What supports do teachers need to effectively teach common core using experiential learning?*

Three Levels of Text Protocol

Adapted by the Southern Maine Partnership from Camilla Greene's Rule of 3 Protocol, 11/20/03.

Purpose

To deepen understanding of a text and explore implications for participants' work.

Facilitation

Stick to the time limits. Each round takes up to 5 minutes per person in a group. Emphasize the need to watch air time during the brief "group response" segment. Do 1 – 3 rounds. Can be used as a prelude to a Text-based Discussion or by itself.

Roles

Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants

Process

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper
2. If participants have not done so ahead of time, have them read the text and identify passages (and a couple of back-ups) that they feel may have important implications for their work.
3. A Round consists of:
 - One person using up to 3 minutes to:
 - LEVEL 1: Read aloud the passage she/he has selected
 - LEVEL 2: Say what she/he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
 - LEVEL 3: Say what she/he sees as the implications for his/her work.
 - The group responding (for a **TOTAL** of up to 2 minutes) to what has been said.
4. After all rounds have been completed, debrief the process.