

Book Notes
for
Learning in Relationship:
Foundation for Personal and Professional Success
Ron Short, 1998
Learning in Action Technologies
Notes compiled by Jim Force

The purpose of these notes is to provide an in-depth overview of the contents of this excellent book. *Learning in Relationship* can be purchased online from **Learning in Action** http://www.learninginaction.com/pub_1.html or **Amazon** <http://www.amazon.com/>

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Introduction

Learning in relationship is “about how to learn from others who have different perspectives” (p. 1).

“Communicating isn’t about doing it right the first time. It’s about learning from each other – especially when communications go wrong” (p. 2).

Learning in relationship is about learning what is happening in the here and now:
among you and others
between you and one other person
within yourself (p.3)

Part 1 Thinking Lessons

We don't know what goes on in each other's heads, but we assume we do so we don't ask.
p. 7

Learning from others means you do 4 things: (p. 8)

1. Acknowledge that what is in your head is a story that you are making up
2. Share it
3. Inquire about the other person's story
4. Revise your story based upon the new information

A learning culture begins with one person deciding to tell their truth. p. 10

When people know how to create trust, mutual respect and a learning culture, for the most part, they will do so. p. 11

1 In the Middle, Looking Out

"Relationships are the very heart and soul of an organization's ability to get any job done." p. 15

"What goes on between individuals defines what an organization is and what it can become." p. 16

Relationships and their interactions are the DNA of an organization - they create and define organizations. p. 16

2 In the Middle, Looking Inside-out

You are in the center of your relationships (p. 19)

Your relationships do not exist separate from you
Your relationships can not exist or change without you
Relationship problems do not start independent of you
Relationship problems cannot be resolved independent of you

"Our biggest, yet least visible, problem is that we think the world is outside of us." p. 22

In order to learn we need to focus on what we feel, think and want - from the inside. p. 22

3 Living from the Inside-out

"To operate from the inside-out means to observe and describe the motives, intentions, feelings, judgments, and attributions that drive your responses to the other. It is to be in touch with your internal experience." p. 25

From the outside-in (p. 30)

Two people have one relationship with each other

From the inside-out

There are two relationships - the one each of you have with the other

In a team of 5 there are 20 relationships

"To respect and claim your perspective while simultaneously being open to other perspectives is the key to learning." p. 30

"To be open to influence from other perspectives, you risk the discovery that the only reality you have is inaccurate." p. 30

"Everybody in your conscious life lives his or her life inside of you. Each individual fits into active stories you create about them, your relationship, and yourself." p. 30

"Learning from others has little to do with them, and a whole bunch to do with you."
p. 30

"Direct your energies away from managing others to managing yourself with others."
p. 30

Discrepancies between realities is an opportunity to learn. p. 33

Learning is being open to the new choices available to you so you can alter what you have accepted as real. p. 33

4 Learning form the Inside-out

"To be differentiated is to share from the inside-out what is real to us." p. 35

Undifferentiated Relationship (p. 36)

Means assuming you know what is inside the other.

Undifferentiated Behaviors (p. 36)

Decide to do something because you 'assume' the other wants you to.

Give the other information you're 'sure' they want to hear.

Talk with a third party about what you're 'sure' the original person doesn't want to hear.

Get others to change when you need to change.

Make judgments about others which are judgments about yourself.

Attribute motives to others which are your own.

Attribute feelings to others which you have toward them.

Accuse others of doing unto you what you are doing to them.

Differentiated Relationship (p. 37)

Means having the ability to be an "I" in the face of "We" pressures.

Differentiation Requires (p. 37)

An awareness and ownership of your own internal state.

A willingness to share your internal state with others as information.

The ability to say what's true for you, in spite of the pressure to do otherwise.

The ability to stay in contact and in relationship with others, and to listen, understand and be open to influence from their positions.

The courage to be true to your own way of seeing things.

"To participate in a differentiated interaction means to describe what is truly going on inside - even if it is undifferentiated and fused." p. 37

"In undifferentiated interactions, we make our stories stick to others . . . like Post-it notes." p. 40

5 Learning from Patterns

Accepting that all interpersonal relationship interaction patterns are co-created, liberates us from the twin burdens of innocence and blame. p. 43

"Any patterns you and your colleagues have are created by all of you." p. 45

"There are only two kinds of patterns - those that differentiate and lead to learning, and those that are undifferentiated and do not lead to learning." p. 47

"One key to learning from others is to see yourself as a participant in the creation and maintenance of patterns." p. 47

"The problem, therefore, is often not the stated problem but the underlying patterns that keep the stated problem in place." p. 47

"All the information you require to learn from each other is always present, all the time, in every situation, within, among and between you and the others involved, in the here and now." p. 47

6 Noticing Now

"The secret to learning is to *observe*, not *change*, yourself." p. 49

"Information about your separate stories changes the relationship, not the individuals in the relationship." p. 49

OBSERVER SELF

"It's not the ability to control what happens to you but the ability to *observe* how you respond to what happens." p. 50

Characteristics of an Active Observer Self (p. 51)

It always *observes in the present*. You can't notice in the past; you can only remember.

It always *observes the Self*.

It always *observes without judgment*; it simply notices that you are judging.

"The more you use your observer [self], the smarter it gets." p. 51

"The greater the emotional intensity in a situation, the more you need your observer."
p. 51

Part 2 Inquiry Lessons

Inquiry Lessons: (p. 55)

1. Learn from Among: Systems Inquiry. Big picture perspective.
Discover information about the structure, roles, and underlying patterns
2. Learn from Between: Mutual Inquiry. Engage with another person to learn directly from each other from the inside-out.
3. Learn from Within: Self Inquiry. Discover the here-and-now information that lies within you and that is about you.

1 Learning from Among: Systems Inquiry

"Much of what you observe going on in you in relationship is often the *result* of the context and patterns - not the cause." p. 59

An organization's real structure is in the patterns of interaction regardless of job/role descriptions. p. 60

"Every relationship you have constitutes a different system. . . . [Y]our system not only changes with different people, it changes when the same people converse about different topics." p. 61

"Problems arise when one system interferes with another." p. 62

"The function of a boundary is to protect one system from interference from another system." p. 63

Boundaries are fundamental to every human relationship. Without them information is unclear, contaminated, distorted. Without clarity there is no learning. p. 64

"Action, not understanding, creates change. . . . [C]hange and learning only happen when you act differently." p. 64

2 Learning from Between: Mutual Inquiry

What makes the difference in human interactions "lies in whether the individuals involved talk directly to each other, capably engage in mutual inquiry and learn." p. 67

Goal of Mutual Inquiry: (pp. 68-69)

To learn what is true.

To seek and share descriptive information.

Descriptive information is not arguable.

Mutual Inquiry means that you and the other person: (pp. 69-70)

Separate what you *think* the other person feels from what they report they feel

Separate what you think are the other person's intentions from what they report them to be

Separate what the other person actually did from your interpretation of what they did and the impact it had on you

Mutual Inquiry occurs when two people create a dialogue that: (pp. 71-72)

Closes the gap between intentions and impact

Clarifies misunderstandings

Clarifies incorrect attributions

Leads to mutual understanding

And when "I" messages: (p.75)

Are based on a clear intent and agreement to learn

Lead to being descriptive of the behavior and what is inside the people involved

Lead to mutual ownership

Mutual Inquiry requires two sets of skills: (p. 72)

Give information by describing your here-and-now feelings, thoughts, and wants.

Receive information by listening and accepting the other person's internal feelings, thoughts, and wants.

Open Inquiry (Communication) p. 76

Tell others about the impact they have on you here and now

Tell others what you think, feel and want in the moment

3 Learning from Within: Self-Inquiry

Goal: to learn, rather than to change. "It is to develop the awareness, acknowledgement and acceptance of what is true about you now." (p. 80)

With this "you will be able to be present here and now and make different choices." (p. 81)

Response to internal/external stimuli are "patterned, channeled, rutted, intransigent, deeply rooted, highly predictable, seriously habituated" aspects of self. p. 80

Your personal history is as much a here-and-now personal construct as is your current reality. p. 81

"Your experience is not what happens to you, but what you do internally with what happens to you. You create your experience." That is you select what sensory data to pay attention to and then based on your wants, feelings and thinking interpret the data you have selected. p. 82

"The most empowering skill is the ability to look inside and gain awareness of the origins of your reaction." p. 83.

"We judge ourselves by our intentions. We judge others by their impact." p. 85

"To own that you create the impact others have on you is, without a doubt, the most difficult and the most important lesson to learn." p. 85

To learn from within, you need to: (p. 90)

- Notice, not try to change yourself

- Acknowledge that your past impacts the present

- Own the impact others have on you

- Understand your defenses

Part 3 Application Lessons

Differentiation precedes integration. p. 93 [This is exactly what Wilber contends.]

1 How to Conduct Systems Inquiry

Systems Inquiry (pp. 96-97)

Identify the Relevant System

1. Identify the purpose of the system
2. List the Players

Individuals and groups whose patterns of behavior, relationships and interactions either facilitate or hinder movement toward achieving your purpose

"If you cannot identify the system, you cannot change it." p. 98

Characteristics of the relationships within a system can be shown graphically.

Map the System (pp.98-101)

1. Write the purpose on the top of a blank sheet of paper.
2. Place individuals in the system in relation to each other.
3. Graphically portray the relationships.
4. Identify who has the executive authority and responsibility for this system.
5. Follow steps 2-4 as the system would be if it were working.
6. Develop a list of action steps you can take to go from the first to second map.

Questions for Observing Here-and-Now Patterns (p. 102)

What is the pattern? What game does this pattern remind you of?

What kind of a dance does it remind you of?

Who talks the most? Who talks the least? Who talks after whom? Who interrupts whom? What impact does each of these have on the functioning of the group?

How do you characterize the tones of voice - dominant, commanding, declarative, apologetic, whinny?

How old are the voices - young or old?

Are the patterns or interactions congruent with the roles?

Non-Learning Patterns: (pp. 103-105)

In the absence of boundaries they create undifferentiated interactions.

Talking about "it"

Talking in Generalities

Talking Hypothetically

Using Questions to Hide Statements

Talking in the Third Person about Someone Who is Present

Talking to Anybody Except the Person Who can use the Information

Speaking in the Passive Voice

Learning Patterns happen when (p. 106)

- Two people talk directly to each other about what is inside them *now*.
- You are descriptive of the here-and-now impact you have on the other.
- You inquire.
- You make individual choices based on shared information.

Triangulation happens when you talk *about* another person rather than talk *to* them. p. 109

Detriangulate: (p. 111)

- Identify and list specific individuals whom you have talked about.
- Inform the person you have talked with about what you are going to do.
- Go directly to each of the individuals you have listed for the purpose of learning.

Using Triangles Constructively: (p. 111)

- Seek a coach (competent colleague)
- Task is to talk about yourself so that you become more grounded and clear.

2 How to Conduct Mutual Inquiry

For Mutual Inquiry to be successful, it is essential to "agree to learn." p. 113

Agreeing to learn means (p. 114)

- Share information and make individual choices rather than try to change the other person.
- The goal is to change the relationship, not each other.
- Be prepared to learn about ourselves.
- Invite descriptive stories from each other.
- Accept each other's stories as our separate, individual truths.
- Be true to our individual stories and what is real to each of us, while being open to new information.
- When feeling defensive, report it to each other.

When confused ask two questions (p. 116)

- Am I being descriptive?
- Am I inviting the other to be descriptive?

Descriptive Dialogue means sharing and understanding facts that are unarguable. p. 116

"Only you can choose to be descriptive about yourself." p. 118

"I believe that what most folks call being open and honest is actually being reactive."
p. 119

Listening means "your internal stories *will* be influenced and changed." p. 123

Principles of Listening (pp. 126-127)

Paraphrase

Check Perceptions

Be Curious

Be Empathic

Help the Speaker Get Specific and Descriptive

Demonstrate Respect

Be Genuine

Use Immediacy

Listening Guidelines (pp. 127-128)

Communicate respect. Accept the other's internal experience as *their* truth, but not necessarily *the* truth.

Suspend your experience (feelings, thoughts and wants) but track what is going on inside you.

Place yourself in the other person's shoes.

Be congruent, open and genuine.

Don't tell your story until you understand the other person's side to their satisfaction.

Refrain from giving unsolicited advice or "shoulds" or "oughtas."

Refrain from taking responsibility for the other's internal reality.

Refrain from negating in any way the other's feelings, thoughts or desires.

If you are not learning from each other, take a break and perhaps try later or give up on the relationship. p. 128

"Your responsibility is to describe and invite. It is all you can do." p. 128

3 How to Conduct Self-Inquiry

"If you intend to learn, you must accept that you create your interpretations." p. 132

Questions for increasing Differentiation: (pp. 133-135)

What does the other person *do* that hooks you?

Separate Your Inside from the Outside

When they do that behavior, what do you

Feel toward them?

Feel toward yourself?

Attribute to them?

Attribute to yourself?

What do you say in response?

Separate Your Self from the Other

How descriptive is your response?

How does it hide what you think, feel, and want?

Have you seriously listened and inquired about what the other person feels, thinks, and wants?

Does the person remind you of someone? Who?

Separate Your Projections from the Other

Are your feelings toward the other familiar?

Toward whom have you had those feelings before?

How old do you feel when you react to the other?

Separate Your Now from Your Past

How is this experience similar to life as a child?

What role do you take? Is this a familiar role?

When is the earliest time you can remember responding as you do?

4 On Your Own

Applications

Remind Yourself: Look Inside

“Faceless” Exercise: The Truth of Inside-Out

Two Truths:

“First, you always interact from the inside-out Second, you have some of the greatest difficulty seeing what is most obvious.” p. 139

Differentiating What’s Inside