

Building a Truly Civil Society

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TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE



Creating an Organizational Culture of Inquiry



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Creating a culture of inquiry is a key element – some would say THE key requirement – for promoting strengths-based leadership and management, based as it is on the recognition that in any organization, on any issue, a wide range of perspectives is valuable and instructive. Better decisions will result.

The workshop as a whole or the individual exercises could be integrated into a Board or staff meeting, community consultation or conference—into the decision-making process for any group!

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

In pairs or threes, participants tell each other two truths and a lie about themselves. After each person’s contribution, there is an opportunity for clarifying questions and then others in the small group try to discern the lie.

Outcome... people get to know more about each other AND practice or warm-up their “asking questions” skills and their inclination to do so.

Reporting to the larger group is optional but may be interesting. If it seems to be taking too long, stop. Members of the group can be invited to continue the discernment process later.

PERCEPTUAL SNAPSHOT

The facilitator poses 3-4 questions. Participants record brief responses on a slip of paper (for their own use only). All responses are recorded on flip charts. Then participants are invited to comment on the range and substance of the responses. There is no attempt to forge consensus or agreement. It’s an exercise to acknowledge and consider the full range of perceptions and opinions.

SAMPLE “PERCEPTUAL” QUESTIONS:

1. Using a scale of 1-10, how successful have we been at implementing strengths-based approaches?

People typically want to question the question. For example, they may want to know what the person asking the question means by successful. Questioning the question provides an opportunity for the facilitator to duck! Group members are really talking to each other not to the facilitator and, in the discussion, a very wide range of views of “success” may emerge—stimulating more discussion!

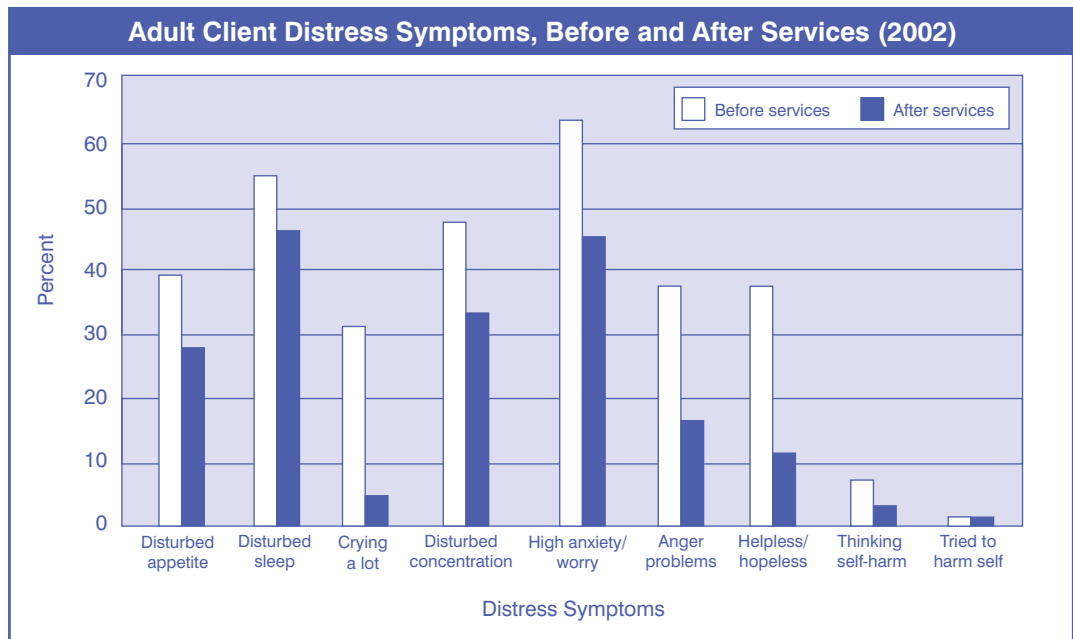
2. How many family serving agencies are there in Australia?
3. How many benefit from the work of your agency?
4. What percent of our work takes a community development approach? What percent of our work do you think **should** be allocated to community development?
5. What is the biggest challenge facing families right now?

While there may be a ‘correct’ answer for some of these questions, people’s perceptions and opinions are their own “correct” answer. Discussion typically results in people changing their opinion or broadening their interpretation of the question. It also reinforces the need for getting the facts required for sound decision-making or planning.



ORGANIZATIONAL ON-SITE ANALYSIS

The process of Organizational On-Site Analysis has been used extensively within the network of United Ways in Canada where it was developed and elsewhere including Australia. It is a participatory and fact-based approach to planning and decision-making.



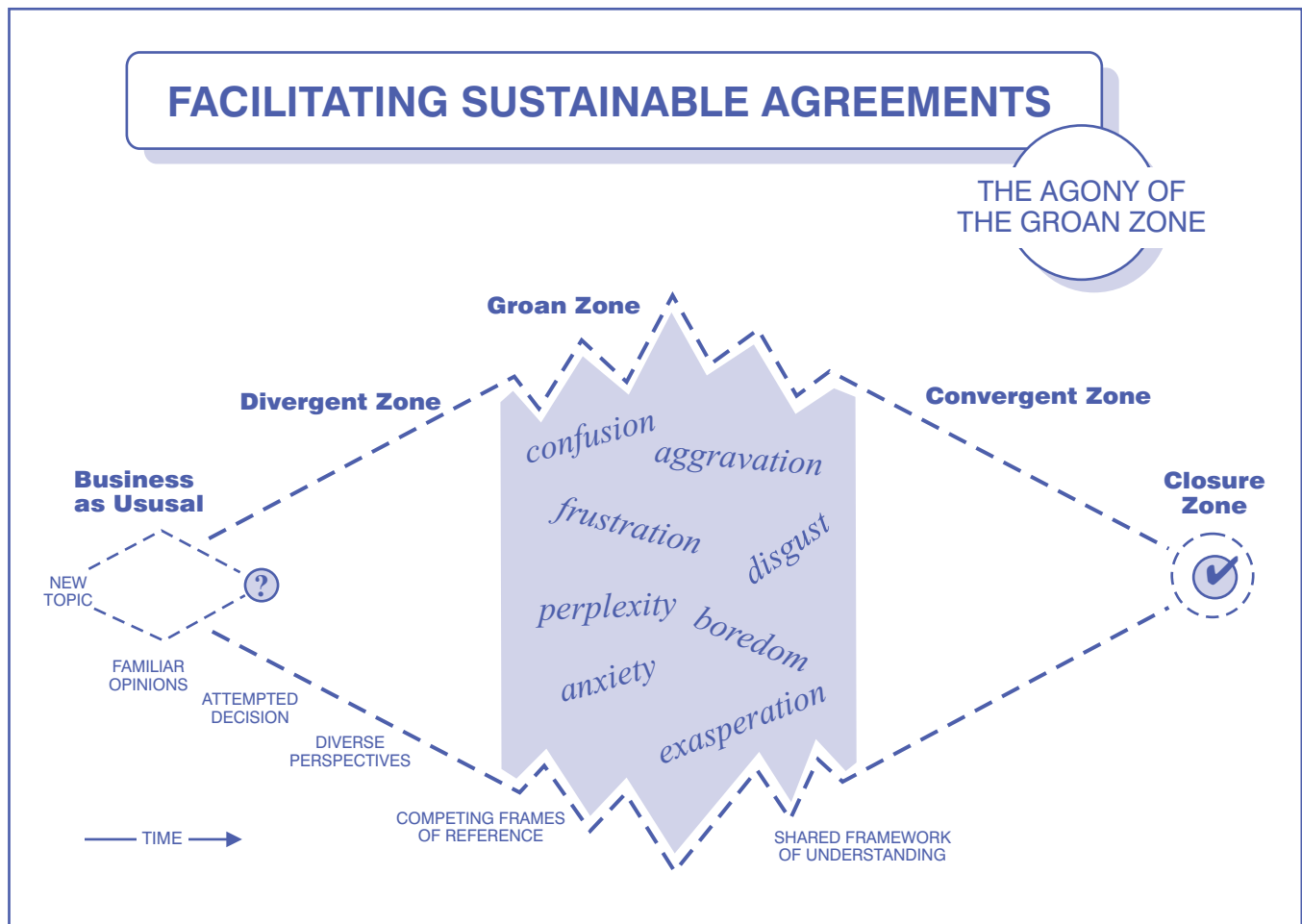
Families First Family Services: Three-Year Statistics						
	2000	% chg.	2001	% chg.	2002	% chg.
Total Revenue	1,578,000	+ 8.2	1,664,000	+ 5.4	1,711,000	+ 2.9
Total Expenses	1,512,000	+ 8.7	1,637,000	+ 8.3	1,740,000	+ 6
Surplus or Deficit	166,800	+ 3	193,800	+ 16	164,800	- 15
Families Served	1,050	+ 8	1,100	+ 5	1,100	0
Total FTEs	7		6		6.5	
Total Families in Need	Unk.		Unk.		Unk.	

STEPS

1. Make observations about the data in each chart. Observations are neutral re-statement of individual facts.
2. Individuals consider whether each observation reflects a positive or negative trend.
3. Discuss reasons for determining strength or weakness... i.e. positive or negative trend.
4. Draw conclusions based on the strengths and weaknesses observed. For each conclusion, cite the supporting observations.
5. Develop recommendations based on the conclusions.



THE GROAN ZONE



With thanks to Sam Kaner, author of *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* published by New Society Publishers in 1996.

“After a period of ‘divergent thinking’ most groups enter the Groan Zone. Suppose for a moment that the participants have just finished brainstorming about something. Sifting through the ideas and discussing a few in a more in depth way is often a gruelling process. Moreover, when people misunderstand or don’t completely understand one another, their behaviour often becomes more confused, more impatient more unpleasant all around characterized by frustration

and the concern that there will never be agreement or convergence in thinking.

“Most groups flee from the Groan Zone long before they have developed the capacity to think together. This is reflected in the quality of their decisions. Those who do persevere discover that what enabled them to survive the struggle were the periods they spent trying to understand each other.”